MESSALINA

TO THOSE WHO ENJOYED
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OFFER THIS SENSATIONAL
PICTURE OF LUSTFUL ROME

·BY H. STADELMANN·

MESSALINA

A PICTURE OF LIFE IN IMPERIAL ROME

by

H. STADELMANN

Meretrix Augusta — imperial harlot!

So rang the verdict of the Senate that stripped Messalina of her titles, power and worship from the greatest empire of the ancient world. Wife of the aging Emperor Claudius, her debaucheries amazed even the most dissolute household of antiquity, and at the age of *twenty-four* she was condemned by an outraged husband and an obsequious Senate which strove to uproot her from the memory of the Roman people. Yet Messalina lives on—her fame is the fame of Eros himself, god of fleshly love, whom mankind ever puts in chains but never can forget.

This is no conventional recounting of the incredible story of Messalina alone. Unsparing in the details of her life, the author paints her against the society that bore her. We have, therefore, a flashing, daring, ruthless *exposé* of the noonday of the Eternal City, done by a brilliant modern hand. Characters of dead history are galvanized to life by the oldest passions of humanity in this unforgetable modern picture of an ancient civilization.

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NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
1930

Translated from the German by
H. F. ANGOLD

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
STEPHEN AUSTIN AND SONS, LIMITED, HERTFORD.

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MESSALINA

THEY SAID . . .

" Meretrix Augusta ! " Thus was Messalina condemned. And since then few have heard her named without a feeling of disgust for the profligate life of a woman who in her day was accosted as " illustrious harlot ", and looked upon as a beast, a compound of lustfulness and cruelty, the symbol of depravity in all its forms.

Experienced in all the arts and dissipations of the courtesan, driven by a poisoned imagination into perpetual mischief-making, she wallowed in orgies of perversity and debauchery, gloried in triumphs of shamelessness like a fury of the passions, dragged others into the pestilential atmosphere of her excesses and was a mistress of immorality and incredible vice. She lacked all conscience. Not madness, but passion, drove this woman to atrocious deeds.

This is still the verdict of history, nearly two thousand years after her death, nor did any one ever think otherwise during her life. Thus the memory of Messalina endures, shrouded in a darkness of shame, unworthy of recall among people who heed the voice of conscience, her name is known only as a byword for every iniquity. For what reason was it that, after the death of Valeria Messalina, wife of the Emperor Claudius, all pictures and statues of her were ordered by State decree to be destroyed, that her memory was relegated to oblivion, and banished from the mind of the people as they passed on their way to food, drink and the day's work ? Types of women, like a Herodias, who, out of revenge, demanded the head of a man from her husband, the Jewish King Herod ; like a Salome, who, when her royal father was excited by wine, fascinated him by her erotic dances and thereby earned a man's head—whether such women happen to be legendary figures or not—have become familiar to human society. They have attained, in the imagination of mankind, to the reality of living acquaintances. The deeds of Herodias and Salome have kindled the imagination of poets, and, idealized, have become favourite subjects of art. How great a place in history, again, is occupied by Catherine Alexievna, who, following the dictates of an unscrupulous will, achieved her dream of becoming sole ruler of Russia, but only by means of murder and fraud. Catherine the Second shines like a pearl among renowned monarchs.

The great courtesans of courts have become the favourites of society, and later generations love to accompany them through the life of adventure, intrigue and passion depicted in their memoirs. Authors, poets, painters and sculptors have made the lives of these women celebrated. But not one has considered it worth while to choose the life of Messalina as a theme for his art. No painter can find colours to make a portrait of this woman, no sculptor wishes to perpetuate her form. Is there really nothing in her life which can appeal to us as a manifestation of the workings of fate, which can give us sympathy with the outcast in her and let us live her tragedy in ourselves ? The great sinner Mary Magdalen is a fit subject for artistic treatment, because she repented. But the world has spoken its last word of judgment upon Messalina. A historian who attempted to throw new light upon Messalina's character was contradicted by some and ignored by most.

Since, however, man's mode of life and his destiny are not governed by his own will it would seem at least interesting—if it were not her right as a human being—to disentangle Messalina's career from its environment. For every human being who has been reproached with sensuality and cruelty must have had material and opportunities which enabled him to indulge these propensities.

The questions which clamour for an answer are : Of what ferment of human beings was Messalina the scum ; from what ulcer in the history of civilization was she cast up ?

How came public opinion to abandon the first woman in the world, Valeria Messalina, Empress of the Roman Empire, to inexpiable disgrace and the pillory for all time ?

I

ROME

We are all called and must all play a part upon this earth, for Life wills it so. Life will assert itself, pushing onwards and outwards in innumerable forms. Often in its course it bars its own progress, struggles to remove the barriers ; then, having gained strength from success, hurries on its way. We are woven into the fabric of countless events ; are caught into a maelstrom of currents which stream away from us and in turn involve the fate of others. Space, which confines us, time, which measures our life, and everything in motion beyond these first causes of our existence, play their part in forming the entity of human life. If we but contemplate the past, our senses are paralysed by the spectacle. We want to know reasons, we grope unsteadily for values, attach them to a human life, call that life good, or bad—and are mistaken. So soon, however, as we free ourselves from prejudice, unravel the tangle, part the strands and trace them back to where they formed no definite pattern, we realize that the values with which we clothe the life of a human being are unreal ; and when, going onward in our search for a life rhythm we reach the immeasurable, the incomprehensible, we ask no longer where guilt lies. We feel in our heart of hearts that this or that man had to lead his life in the way he did, and we perceive the life of every man as an image which might have been our own had ours been subjected to the same conflicting influences.

Among those who have been called, the chosen few are the stars toward whom the multitude looks—with praise or blame.

Valeria Messalina was woven into a fabric of events of inestimable significance for the greater part of mankind, and to this day their implications affect the evolution of the inhabitants of more than three continents.

The spirit of the age was reflected as in a mirror, and the mirror was Rome, the city.

" . . . And the building of the wall of it was jasper : and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper ; the second, sapphire ; the third, chalcedony ; the fourth, emerald ; the fifth, sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolyte ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, topaz ; the tenth, chrysoprase ; the eleventh, jacinth ; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; every several gate was of one pearl : and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass . . ."

Thus the heavenly Jerusalem is extolled in Revelation. But could the heavenly city bear comparison with Rome ? A stranger, coming to Rome, exclaimed in delight at the sight of the city : " How beautiful the heavenly Jerusalem must be, if earthly Rome glows with such splendour ! " With what magnificence must ancient Rome have shone when men could say, " Heaven cannot look upon anything more sublime than the city of Rome ; eye cannot compass her extent, nor mind her beauty ; nor are there lips to utter her praises." In a panegyric of Rome Aristides said : " As a strong man lifts others above his head and carries them, so does Rome carry city upon city, which she has raised above her head. If they could be spread out on the ground, they would cover the whole breadth of Italy, even to the Adriatic Sea, like a single town." That was his way of describing the massive, lofty houses of the only city.

The city was originally built on seven hills. In Messalina's day, when she called it her home, Rome stretched far out into the Campagna, so far that the eye could not follow it, even from the highest hill. To the eye of the observer, Rome was immeasurable, a far-reaching maze of palaces, temples and gardens. Nowhere a mark to show where one area ended and another began ; Rome was apparently unlimited. It had stretched out its many arms, encroached upon the smaller, outlying places, and swallowed them up. The remotest suburbs were adorned in the Roman fashion and girt by the pleasure grounds which Rome gave them. Villas, temples and monuments mingled with the dark green of cypress groves, and through the varied shades of green of the billowy pine woods tall gables, domes, pinnacles and columns gleamed white.

By night, he who looked out from the Alban hills over the Campagna received the impression that all Rome stood in a sea of fire from the light of the setting sun ; a masterpiece of the marriage of human art with the grandest beauty of Nature. In Rome, Art had become Nature's complement. The city was lavishly provided with parks and gardens, which lay between the houses, while everywhere was perennial green, from a thousand varieties of planted trees and shrubs. Men entered the city through aisles, as it were, of laurel and plane trees ; the extensive public gardens were a riotous profusion of flowers and foliage—lotus trees with broad leafy crown, palms, cypresses, plane trees, firs, and roses, roses everywhere. The city was simply one great garden.

The Roman garden was a masterpiece of design. It contained aviaries with all kinds of bright-hued birds from other lands, fish-ponds, and miniature woods stocked with game. Crocuses, violas, poppies, hyacinths, and anemones bloomed there, and it was set about with sculptured marbles of the finest work.

Here and there water leapt from silver pipes into a marble basin supported by slender columns ; the bottom of the marble basin was so thin, that anyone looking into it could see the flowers and the grass beneath. On either side water plashed over narrow marble ledges into a vast marble basin let into the earth.

Everything in Rome was made subservient to man's pleasure. Everything was planned to enhance his enjoyment of beauty. In the gardens from column to column hung purple awnings to act as a filter to the sun, that it might pour a red light over the white marble tiles or the green of the lawns. Entire hills were transformed into pleasure gardens. Lucullus, who, as conqueror of two mighty Eastern kingdoms, had taken their golden treasures, had built himself on Monte Pincio a country seat of unimagined splendour. The gold of the defeated kings, Mithridates and Tigranes, was transmuted into gorgeous palaces, columned halls and luxuriant gardens. Decades after the death of Lucullus, Messalina was mistress of this magnificence.

Those who were not rich and could not have their villas and land, delighted their eyes with the spectacle of all these splendours and enjoyed the doles provided out of municipal funds. On the wide plain, hemmed in on three sides by the River Tiber, recreation was to be found, and thousands realized there their dreams of a happy life. There was dancing, singing, and music ; discus and javelin throwers practised their art ; pugilists and wrestlers pursued their training ; horsemen and chariot drivers swept headlong by ; strollers, spectators and idlers, who preferred mere existence to any kind of work, assembled there in masses.

But in the city, too, there were public gardens, with pergolas and pleasure groves in abundance, exquisitely planned and laid out. Rome was adorned like a woman in festal garb. It was an eternal holiday. The Roman landscape and the Roman sky were no different. Everything glittered and shone in the radiant sunlight, and night brought new beauty with its play of lights in the darkness.

Night and day the gardens of the city were filled with people. The laurel, pine and palm groves tempted to pleasure ; snug thickets held out the promise of silence concerning what might happen there. They were the meeting-place for confidences, for lovers' trysts. Beautiful, richly-decorated marble benches were placed between green bushes, and, near by, roguish little Cupids invited the passer-by to linger in wait for a fair lady. Marble nymphs in charming attitudes played in and around the basins of the grottoes, which were rich in statuary. Satyrs with goats' feet and pointed ears startled nymphs, and, with half-closed eyes and sidelong smile, gloat over the successful jest. Leda took her pleasure with the swan, Venus, the goddess of love, was represented in a hundred forms.

Rome was like a magic city ; nothing was lacking to satisfy the most expectant eye or the most ardent imagination. He who came from afar and suddenly beheld Rome before him in all its perennial beauty must have felt like the wayfarer who, in latter-day Italy, rushed at the tall flowers bathed in sunlight, threw his arms round them and hailed them joyously with the words : " Here I am ! You have waited for me ! "

What bound men to Rome was a quiet yet strong sense of identity. There the unspoken wish took shape under their eyes, there deep longings found instant fulfilment. Rome, the marble city in sylvan gardens, was a city reborn. Octavianus Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome—from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14 he controlled the destinies of Rome and the far-flung might of the Roman Empire—said on his death-bed to the friends who were standing round : " I received from you a Rome of earth and leave you one of stone." In his day it was at last possible for men, sheltered by peace, to turn their thoughts to the pleasures of life. For long, for centuries the people of Rome had been denied these enjoyments. Now the gates of restraint were thrown down, the pent-up, turbulent, hurrying torrent of eager life flowed through. At every step, at every sight and sound the spectator was reminded of the philosophy of life, that a man only lives once and that " after the last hour of life there is just as little feeling and passion as before entering the world of the body."

" Enjoy the hour ! " " Gather the fruits of the day ! " " *Carpe diem* ! " the poet Horace called to his contemporaries.

Everybody who could afford it built his house with a view to pleasure, which crept into every detail like a luxuriant plant. To the rich—and they were extremely numerous—their palaces, their country seats and their houses meant nothing but the indulgence of their wishes, which all lay in the direction of the unrestricted gratification of sensual desire. Building had developed on a scale of luxury hitherto almost unknown. The great private houses contained picture galleries, libraries, entire museums, and cabinets of curios for the pleasure and diversion of the owners and their numerous guests, and, not least, as a sign that the owner could say : " I am a rich man, I can live like my Emperor." And as for the building itself, careful note had been made of the words of the Emperor Augustus when he saw the house which the curule aedile Calpurnius Piso had built for himself : " He built as though Rome would stand for ever." The rich man felt proud when he could apply this imperial saying to his own house. The capital of the world empire must be a city of wonders: such was the ambition of Rome. The architectural decoration of the buildings was unparalleled. To the white Carrara marble were added coloured varieties from other lands. Columns and panels displayed the natural colour of the variegated stone and allowed the eye no rest from ever fresh arrangements, harmonies and contrasts of beauty. The interiors, with their pilasters of mottled violet marble, their columns of russet yellow and green-veined marble and of serpentine, surmounted by blocks of white marble, combined with the other luxuries to form a compelling picture. Had no man ever set foot in those rooms, had no feasts on a gigantic scale of pomp and circumstance, plays, animated conversations and fateful events taken place there, the mere sight of them would have conjured up many a vision, kindled the imagination, and peopled the scenes with striking and passionate characters. Great marble panels, on which entire decorative pictures were " painted in mosaic ", were let into the walls. Callistus, a freedman of the Emperor Caligula, had in his banqueting-hall thirty pillars of Oriental alabaster. Rome was mistress of the world and procured her building material from every land. The hills of the Arabian desert of Egypt at Jebel Urakan yielded honey-coloured alabaster. Porphyry was brought from Jebel Dokhan, granite from Jebel Hadireh ; near Hammamet they found breccia which, when polished, owing to its admixture of varied minerals and stone and its occurrence in combination with quartz, dolomite, porphyry, granite, and gneiss offered, without any artificial additions, a mosaic of a marvellous and often quite bizarre and captivating kind. The quarries containing these natural treasures, which seemed to have been specially made for interior decoration, were found and exploited in the time of the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54), the husband of Valeria Messalina. The hunt for raw material for new luxury was unremitting. For the completion of his bath a certain Claudius Etruscus, no longer content with the costly Thasian, Carian and serpentine marble, nor even with onyx, used the newly-discovered, spotless, dazzling white marble from Phoenicia, and studded it with mosaics of coloured glass. The pillars in the interiors were inlaid with similar mosaics. The entire floor was often of glass. Walls papered with silver leaf, encrusted with precious stones fashioned into figures, and walls covered with gold, gleaming with inlaid mother-of-pearl and precious stones, were occasionally to be found.

Every day brought new inventions in its train. There were mansions built of such translucent stone that the interiors were light even when the door was shut. Ceilings were panelled. Gold, jewels, and ivory were blended in ornamental design which could be rearranged at any moment, so that there was ever a new, a different ornament on the ceiling as each fresh course was served. The main banqueting-hall was built in the shape of a dome and revolved day and night about its axis. "Now," said the Emperor Nero, whose first wife was Octavia, the graceful daughter of Messalina, "at last I am going to be housed like a human being," when he had his palace—"the House of Gold"—built in this fashion.

Did not people grow tired of this perpetual splendour? But splendour can be subdued. The measure of lavish magnificence and display is simplicity. Simplicity refreshes the senses and fortifies them to endure new splendours. So it was a refinement of voluptuousness to instal "a poor man's box" in the most luxurious palaces! Certain rooms were maintained in a style of studied simplicity, and into these the owner would retire alone or with his guests to recuperate for fresh spectacular delights. If Rome were to be represented by a single house it would be Messalina's, in which the senses called incessantly for fresh intoxication. As the wayfarer passed through the streets of the city, the palaces, gigantic basilicas, built with a lavish expenditure of granite and marble, temples, columns, and colonnades, halls decorated with mural paintings and harbouring fountains or libraries, grottoes with lovely nymphs, monuments, statues of all famous men and fair women, towering obelisks, and magnificent storehouses, gilded steeds and trophies crowning the roofs of the public buildings, figures of marble and porphyry—all assailed him with the insistent cry: "Tarry! Enjoy me! Stay with me! I have been waiting for you to take me into your arms! Let us unite in the rapture of passionate beauty!"

There could be no dallying, where everything rang with the call of life: "On, on, to new delights! Life is rich! The life in me calls to you! 'I will lavish myself upon everything!'"

And the painters: what did they not do, to enhance the radiant beauty which the sun bestowed upon the picture of the Roman city! Not an exterior or interior wall of a municipal building, but was painted with dainty groups of nudes or the epic deeds of traditional heroes.

The luxurious public baths which abounded in Rome were adorned with provocative paintings designed to satisfy the craving of the parched senses. Eros was there in many forms. The love scenes of the gods were depicted with naïve daring: Hephaestus' seduction of Venus, the abduction of Europa by the God Zeus, the ravisher in the form of a bull; the entrancing daughters of Nereus and Doris; the nymph Arethusa, pursued by the river-god Alpheus until at last she was transformed by a goddess into a spring, to rescue her from the unwelcomed attentions of the lustful god.

The baths contained two to three thousand seats. The swimming baths, the vapour-baths, the shower-baths all looked as if they were intended for the use of kings. Any plebeian could visit the baths whenever he liked, and, if he cared, amuse himself, refresh himself or practise gymnastics, for the municipal baths provided everything of the kind on the most luxurious scale. No wonder that Rome was "the cynosure of the eyes of all gods and men ". All who had money enough and were not afraid of arduous travel, made their way there—over wide tracts of country, lofty mountains, rivers and seas to the metropolis, which soon became the "world's hostelry".

In his day Cicero (born 106 B.C., assassinated 43 B.C.) called Rome a community formed by a union of peoples ; a mixture of all races was in the city, as if it were the goal of a universal migration.

"The whole world is in the city," said the contemporary poet Ovid (born at Sulmo 43 B.C., died at Tomi on the shores of the Black Sea A.D. 17). But it was above all when the great circus spectacles were announced that people from the most remote parts mingled in Rome, "the meeting-place of the globe." Even the barbarians came : "the husbandman from the foot of the Balkans, the Sarmatian nourished on mare's milk, dwellers by the sources of the Nile, the guest from the shore of the ocean, Sygambri side by side with Sabaei and Arabians ; and the negro with his crinkly hair bound up on the top of his head."

In the heart of the metropolis there was something for every man to see, hear, fetch, carry, earn, or traffic in. How many did the call of adventure attract to the great city, where far from home, unobserved, they might secretly yield to their inclinations and lusts or, in the turmoil of the crowd, cast all restraint to the winds and give rein to passions of which they had hitherto been unconscious. Ambition, greed, and lasciviousness were indulged to the full. The city looked for entertainment to games of every kind, needed commodities from all parts, and offered ample indulgence in sensual pleasures. There were women in Rome from every part of the world, always ready for a man, and only waiting for him to be prodigal with his passion. Men from far-off lands, Cappadocians, Germans, Nubians, and Egyptians came to visit the Roman courtesan. Rome was the recognized centre for sensations and sensuality. Just as luxury in the matter of housing, dress, eating, and drinking had been planned and provided on an incredible scale, so was the gratification of erotic desire pursued to excess in a hundred different ways. Women from Asia and Egypt brought their cults with them to Rome : as soon as an erotic element revealed itself in these, it was promptly developed by greedy traffickers ; these, having exploited it to obscenity, would disguise it in new associations and set it before their clients once more.

Among other imported cults, that of the Egyptian goddess Isis came to Rome. Forthwith the temple of Isis, while retaining the full ceremonial, temple ritual and devotional exercises, was transformed into a house of ill fame, in which the high priest himself, in full canonicals, played the part of the mercenary procurer. The clandestine traffic in women had the charm of novelty. The men came in throngs, and their senses drugged by colour, music, and dancing, gave themselves up to the bidding of Eros. And the trafficker grew rich. But open traffic in girls was in full bloom, too, and enticed many a man away from his own profession to take up that of making profit out of lewdness. The sculptor Sempronius Nicocrates in Rome wished to come by riches quickly, but to enjoy the pleasures of life while engaged in becoming rich. He abandoned his art, swiftly decided " to be a trafficker in fair women ", became extremely wealthy, and led a life of extravagant pleasure.

Rome was the city of delights. That was what the inhabitants of other lands were told by home-comers and by the Roman troops of occupation. Who, indeed, wished to have his life narrowed ? When adventure waits upon man, the sharply-defined limits of home customs are broken through, and Eros leads along the primrose path, Eros the ever seeking, never dallying, who delves into the ultimate things of Life, and lives by the trifles, who ordains, who is constantly craving for novelty and constantly finding in novelty fresh incentive to further search. He is the driving force in life, the mainspring, the instinctive impulse in man, who, conscious or unconscious of his isolation, sets out on this life, joining company now with this, now with that fellow wanderer, in the hope of finding content in the knowledge that he belongs to some person or group. On the way to such a union, before the goal is reached, countless adventures are to be met. They are the spur to further effort, whether in pursuit of spiritual or of material things. From image to image, from place to place, from town to town !—Where is that which we seek ? The wanderer loses his way, no longer sees his goal. His instinct drives and thrusts him forward in pursuit of new and ever new adventures. He tastes to the full the many and varied delights of life, becomes intoxicated and reels through transports of so-called happiness.

Were the pleasures of Rome, the city of exuberant life, a fulfilment ? Or were they only episodes on the way ? It made no difference. Rome promised dazzling delights, dissolved ties and lured the hardy adventurer to her side. And when primitive instincts are given full play, there is no thought of danger or hardship, or of looking back. Just as a man, hot and thirsty from the burning sun, will risk a cold drink, though it may do harm, so will a child of impulse dash into the outstretched arms of life, even though they rend him.

Rome drew all and sundry to her side and absorbed them, the curious and the calculating alike : the adventurer, the creator—for Eros was concerned with him too—and the shrewd man of affairs, who worshipped Eros enshrined in gold. It was a never-ending pilgrimage of the most diverse groups of people to the city of promise. Every new arrival had a mission to perform—for himself, or on behalf of others . . .

A fresh throng appears on the scene. The mules trot by, gaily-coloured ribbons fluttering from their heads and manes ; the two big wheels of the little cart, painted with pictures, cut hastily through the deep layer of dust on the road and envelop in dense clouds the riders following close behind on their squat little Gallic ponies. A few minutes before a legate's train bound for Rome had passed the selfsame way with the greatest pomp, with princely gifts piled upon carts, and forerunners and outriders in costly apparel clearing the path. A woman passes in a luxurious litter borne by slaves. At her side rides a man in exotic dress on an Arab with gold-inlaid harness and purple sash, accompanied by two great hounds. At a short interval follow other litters with women occupants, at least a dozen obsequious slaves and eunuchs, and baggage carts with drivers and servants. Humble wayfarers, singing to the accompaniment of simple musical instruments, and bawling to one another, cross the rich man's path.

Here are itinerant merchants, clad simply for their journey, and accompanied by a few slaves. Going in the opposite direction are others with heavily-laden asses and other beasts of burden. Then comes a fully-equipped military patrol, whose duty it is to ensure the safety of the highway. It was a perpetual caravan, a coming and going, a migration. The roads were thronged with people, as the traveller neared Rome.

An extensive system of roads connected other countries with Rome. Africans, who came to Sicily by ship, used the road from Palermo along the north coast of Sicily to Messina. After a short crossing to the southern extremity of Italy, the road led to Capua, the end of the magnificent Appian Way, which began its course at Rome. The northern peoples had three trade routes to Rome. The easterners took the connections of the *via Egnatia*, which stretched to Thrace, northern Greece and Constantinople ; by crossing the Hellespont the remote peoples from the banks of the Euphrates, from Syria, and Palestine could reach the *via Egnatia*, after having traversed the well-constructed roads with which Rome had provided their own countries. In every kind of conveyance, or on foot, came visitors from the provinces to Rome. The rich took numerous servants or slaves with them, in order that they might not miss domestic comforts and conveniences too greatly, for they were many days and weeks on the way. Others covered the distance provided only with the simplest outfit. The pedestrian trudged on his way untiring, borne up by the anticipation of the sights which the capital of the Empire had in store for him.

A solitary traveller from afar spends the night under the open sky. The glitter of the stars enhances his dream of the splendour of his goal : what tales has he not heard from soldiers and travellers when he was still at home ! He ties his horse to a tree hard by, takes his two cloaks, rolls up one into a cushion for his head, covers himself with the other, and sleeps as well as at home, where he has a wife and servants at his beck and call.

In high spirits, without any belongings, but rich in hope, comes a merry troop of young artists from a far province to try their luck in Rome, where commissions are so plentiful. The Emperor needs statues, and wishes to be surrounded by pictures in his palace. The little troop marches gaily on, careless of privation and hardship, for in Rome are fame, fair women and fortune. A band of students joins forces with the artists. They make friends for the period of the journey, although they do not know one another's language, for they come from different lands. Both students and artists, however, have the same goal at heart, and this enables them to understand one another. A group of actors lies by the side of a wood, resting before proceeding on their journey. They know that plays are popular in Rome, and are bringing native games and jokes from their home to be shown to the curious Roman audiences. The recognized favourites among the companies of artists allow themselves more comfort. They have received an invitation to Rome which promises them large profits. A learned man from afar has obeyed a respectful summons to Rome, and is on his way, with half his library and a number of servants, to the centre of all wisdom. Famous physicians have packed their instruments and cases, loaded them on carts, and, seated in wagons or astride thoroughbred mounts, indulge in dreams of the fame which, once achieved in the capital, will create a still greater demand for their services on their return home.

Then come the masses of undesirables from all quarters of the world. Quacks and impostors, tricksters of every kind, they have all heard of Rome, and of its harvest for everyone, and are all irresistibly drawn to the centre of humanity. They build on hopes, recklessly, as one builds on a morass. In the roadside inns, the real and the sham meet beneath one roof. By the light of an oil lamp or a torch they spend the evening chatting about Rome, the goal of their common desire. A common adventure levelled the differences between them. They sit facing one another as human beings obeying the same instincts and desires. With the rising of the sun, next day, however, the real and the sham are separated again, and each rides on his way.

The harbour of Ostia, the commercial port of Rome, is besieged by ships of every country. Egypt sends her great merchant ships to bring corn for the population of Rome. Asia sends ships unremittingly, and from Greece, Spain, and the northern coast of Africa come wine, oil, almonds, spices, and garments. And with the cargo come foreigners of every hue from brown-reddish bronze to black. The rich merchants, luxuriously dressed and proud of bearing, take with their baggage trains the Appian Way to Rome. Their gleaming harness and brightly-coloured chariots, furnished with rugs and cushions, rattle over the wide paving ; the retinue rides on horseback or in carriages, escorting their master with pomp in van and rear.

A ship unloads a cargo of girls dressed in clothes ranging from the most costly to the plainest stuffs. The procurer carefully inspects each corner to see that his goods have not been prematurely broken into ; then ties the girls in twos and fours and drives them to the town. Here lies a ship full of horses from Arabia : they are intended for the circus races and for the Roman stud-farms. Every province sends to Rome what it can furnish both in brains and material goods.

Now that the blood of so many nations had made Rome into a monarchy, the world no longer rang with the tumult of war. World peace had come. In unity the nations were to learn to understand one another in the capital of the world empire. Relations of an intimate and friendly kind were to be established there for the good of humanity. Trade and industry, science and art were to be the means of bringing the nations together under the common protection of Rome's grandeur and omnipotence. The celebration of the great Roman festivals like the Emperor's birthday or of the anniversaries of heroic national deeds, with their regular accompaniment of splendid circus games, was the signal for the movement of the masses towards Rome. On such occasions there were too few houses and apartments, inns, and private quarters in the great city to shelter all the foreigners, and the fluttering hands of crowds of slaves were busy with the erection of tents and booths for their accommodation. It was a medley of men of all colours and a babel of outlandish tongues. The Roman himself no longer knew whether he was at home or in a foreign country. The light of Rome attracted many to her; and in her dark slums as many lived hidden. Freedom of movement was entirely unrestricted. Rome was open to everyone, and every man had something to say or to give, while most were ready for any enterprise.

When the traveller arrived, it was not always easy for him to find lodgings at once. Merchants from other lands could, thanks to their business connections, stay with their business friends. Others had first to try and form friendships. Many of the new arrivals pitched tents, which they had brought with them, outside Rome, and spent their nights there until other accommodation was available; indeed on their way they often slept in tents. Others spent the night under the open sky, for a too slender purse prevented many of those who went to Rome in search of work from putting up at an inn. The cost of living was not high: bread was 1 *as* ($\frac{3}{4}$*d.*), vegetables 2 *as*, a girl 8 *as*. Wine, of which there was an abundant supply, was served free of charge. But in Rome itself living was more expensive for the foreigner than during his journey. Nor was it very agreeable to stay long at an inn, for arrangements were very primitive. Yet often they made right merry in the taverns. "In the elegiac poem attributed to Virgil, 'The Mistress of the Tavern,' a Syrian landlady, flushed with wine, in Grecian headdress, performing a voluptuous castanet dance in front of her smoky tavern, invites the traveller, whose weary ass is dripping with sweat, to enter. She promises him, at the hour when the trees are vocal with the shrill chirping of the cicadas and the very lizards hide themselves, a cool retreat in the shady arbour in her garden by the murmuring brook ; a repast of cheese, yellow plums, mulberries, grapes, cucumbers, chestnuts, and apples, washed down with new wine ; chaplets of violas, roses and lilies, and rustic music ; and her guest will find not only Ceres and Bacchus there, but Amor also." The little inns were often full to overflowing. Friends, who had journeyed up together, were often obliged to part company : the one went to the inn "The Great Crane", the other a little farther on to "The Serpents", while the third found quarters in the "Olive Booth" or "The Camel".

The newcomers from the provinces left their inn early in the morning. They were loth to stay there long. They wished to enjoy the wonder of the great city's awakening in the morning. Life in Rome began at an early hour. The news-pillars were covered with the latest announcements ; in front of the imperial palace, in the grey light, the groups of those waiting for an audience had already gathered ; the early morning was the best time for buying and selling.

The stranger could not find words enough in praise of Rome, he could only marvel incessantly at all the splendour and magnificence. But whoever came to Rome by the Appian Way, the "Queen of Roads", was possibly disappointed with most of the streets in the capital. For the Appian Way was pointed out as a famous achievement. Two carriages could drive abreast with ease. In Rome, however, there was often barely room for one, in spite of the narrow distance between the wheels. But so perfect was the Appian Way that it might have been poured out of a mould. Polygonal blocks of basalt, polished smooth, were laid so that, though without cement, they seemed to have grown together. Every Roman mile of the Appian Way cost 100,000 sesterces (£1,066) to build, that is to say, £1,143 per English statute mile. It was over 15 feet wide. It was the road where the Emperor Nero developed luxurious travel to a stupendous degree. Imperially arrayed he drove along it in his gold state-coach with the ten horses. The long procession—there could not have been less than a thousand vehicles—was headed by outriders and forerunners in gay apparel ; the mule drivers wore red coats, the mules were shod with solid silver, which gleamed in the sun at every step. And to all this display of magnificence was added the splendours of the Campanian sun—the golden sun, the red sun, the purple sun in an azure sky ; the green sky with little clouds like marble in grey pale red, green, white, and blue ; then again clear blue with golden clouds ; the sky, fiery yellow in greyish-red mist, the globe of the sun purple-gold on a purple field. And in the far distance the sea sparkled in silver, gold and rose-purple. The Way passed through a magic world of changing light and colour, of majesty in the heavens and on earth.

The traveller in such a land and on such a road was dazzled by all the wonders which he saw. If he happened to be in Rome itself he was willing to put up with the narrow streets, in his walk through this city of choicest splendour, because they afforded protection against the fierce rays of the sun. As soon as he had gained a general impression of Rome, he proceeded to inspect the shops. The astounding luxury in building brought a great quantity of marble to Rome. Traders from Greece, Egypt, and Asia brought over shiploads of stone of a colour and beauty till then unseen in the metropolis. Numidian and Synnadian dealers, and others from Chios and Carystus were at the market. Granite dealers from Syene concluded important contracts. Timber merchants from the forests of the Atlas, the Alps, and the Pyrenees brought timber and precious woods in great quantities.

Millions were made in the twinkling of an eye by traders in gold, silver, and precious stones. Emeralds, beryls, opals, sardonyx, chrysolite and rubies seemed in Rome to be almost as necessary as daily bread. New palaces and temples grew up daily, and hundreds and thousands of superb statues of the Emperors sprang into being. Enormous sums were to be made by trading in pearls. Emperors wore slippers encrusted with pearls, and the wealthy imitated their imperial masters : the pearls worn by women were beyond count. A brisk trade was carried on in mother-of-pearl and amber. The great merchants from Africa and India arrived with ivory and returned home laden with gold. A prodigious amount of business was done in paper manufactured in Egypt. In the Forum, the great market-place where the public business of Rome was officially transacted, the basilicas were crowded. One trader is recorded to have inscribed the words " Vendor of all kinds of overseas goods " beside the sign on his shop. The small dealers earned as much in proportion as the great dealers. Delicacies from other lands, cloth, ornaments, and jewellery passed quickly from the hands of the trader to the customer. Foreign ham and sausage found a rapid sale. Textile goods from Flanders, like mantles and carpets, were eagerly sought after. The foreigner in Rome need lack none of the products of his own country. He found himself in the great world emporium, where everyone could obtain what he wanted, for articles of trade find their way, like men, from land to land.

Large and small transactions were concluded easily and smoothly. The Emperor Augustus had introduced a uniform coinage for the whole empire. With Roman denarii a man could go through the whole world. Weights and measures, too, were standardized. How soon the foreigner forgot that Rome had always been his most implacable foe ! It is true that Rome had never borne him malice : she was his enemy in order to become his mighty friend under the great roof—Rome's supremacy—which was to protect one and all. Now that the World Emperor had called the other countries together and united them in a single policy, commerce might flourish, and industry and agriculture thrive. Riches were amassed on an unimagined scale. By adroit speculation the poor man of yesterday could become a rich man to-morrow. Indeed, money-making and the mad pursuit of wealth had become almost proverbial in Rome. Men spoke of the sacred might of wealth and only wondered that "Thou, sorry Mammon, dwell'st not yet in temples, nor have we yet erected altars to money".

Rome welcomed the swarms of artists and craftsmen who flocked to the capital. They poured into the art schools and learned to be sculptors and painters. Rome afforded them ample scope for their talent. The image of the Emperor was fashioned out of every conceivable material, not only for the streets of the city and the public gardens: in every better-class private house a bust of the Emperor was to be found, in marble or in metal, and was greeted with "Ave Caesar" by everyone who entered. Furthermore, the whole of the great empire had to be supplied with likenesses of the Emperor in the shortest space of time. The number of medallions of the Emperor and of members of the royal family was immense. Every visitor took one home with him as a memory of the great imperial era which he himself had lived to see.

Images of great personalities came into being. The sculptors saw to it that the memory of men like Alexander the Great was perpetuated. Such statuary harmonized with the great era of the ascendancy of imperial Rome. Romans who had played a part in the history of the development of Roman might were often taken as subjects for the sculptor's art. The temples were filled with statues of the gods. There was a great demand for religious art in this generally irreligious, superstitious age, and consequently a most flourishing business in religious works of art. Little by little it became the custom for entire colonies of artists to take up residence in front of the temples, where they made images of the gods in all sizes and sold them to the local inhabitants and to foreigners. Dedicatory gifts and votive tablets to the gods were produced in countless numbers. There were pictures of shipwrecked men clinging to wreckage being wafted to shore, and others depicting some danger fortunately averted, such as an earthquake which had passed without doing damage to human life or property.

The artists also had to portray dreams which might have some special significance : for instance, among many others, a lad strangling two serpents. Men wished to see symbols of the fulfilment of their desires as well as of their hopes and fears. In Rome a perpetual appeal was made to the senses. There was no more abandonment to quiet introspection, and the obscure aspirations and fears of the soul had to be given a concrete form in which they could be perceived by the senses.

In addition, the artists were fully occupied in finding artistic expression for the events of everyday life. Those who had got rich quickly felt themselves not a whit less grand than the Emperor ; therefore they must needs line their dining halls with pictures of the chase and of hunting expeditions in which the patron was given pride of place, and of situations in which these upstarts were represented as eloquent orators or as offering sacrifices in person. The mistress of the household wished to be glorified too. She had marble statues of herself executed, showing her in her dressing room, surrounded by attendant slaves. Great was the pride of the Roman citizen. It was the cooper's ambition to see himself depicted in front of his great casks in the wine cellar, the merchant's to be shown in his place of business, the estate owner's to be portrayed with his tenants bringing him sheep, fowls, and eggs. The artist served the living and the memory of the dead. He designed the gravestones and the sarcophagi.

The Roman himself had no particular aptitude for the art of sculpture ; besides, there would have been far too few sculptors in Rome itself to cope with the enormous demand. And so it was that the artists of other lands were called upon to provide Rome and her empire with works of art—and with statues and paintings, for which there was no less demand.

Unfortunately, however, in this mass production the personality of the artist was lost ; the statues of the Emperor in Rome resembled those in Treves or in Alexandria. There was no recognizable personal or original note, such as individual foreigners might have infused into their work. Art grew stereotyped, and thereby characteristic of the imperial era. The people wished to have the Emperor in the decreed conventional model, the other art subjects had also to be adapted to the established pattern—it could no longer be called a style—and, in accordance with the wealthy patron's wish, which was an order, made to reproduce a person or a situation as recognizably as possible. Rome was embellished by the foreign artists. Whereever a man went he encountered figures in stone. It was another world within the world of men, a world that appealed mainly to the senses.

Thus did Rome, in her own interests, provide for the band of artists from other lands who made a living there, even if their talent never found full expression. The poets and actors who came in to take up residence found a rich field for the exercise of their talents. Wealthy people and all who could possibly afford it wished to be amused at table ; the master of the house, with his family and guests, desired to be entertained with wit, and sometimes, provided they did not last too long, with discussions of a more serious nature. Here, too, the subject imitated his imperial master, as he did in so many other respects, and, if he could not always engage great artists, he took lesser ones, of whom there were a great number. Young Greeks, Germans, and Asiatics were popular. With comic verses and recitations, and ballads which verged on obscenity they entertained the guests, who reclined on cushions feasting and drinking, their hair crowned with vine-leaves or chaplets of ivy.

The tables were radiant with flowers. Roses were strewn in bright profusion, perfume was sprayed from fountains, every meal was a feast ; and the poets reaped honours, gold and gifts of every description. By way of change, an actor would come forward and give an impersonation. If it happened to be the birthday of the master or mistress of the house, the poets and actors brought poems and scenes of their own composition with them, and these were received with the greatest enthusiasm, while their authors were suitably rewarded.

Rome was the city of panegyrics. As at the imperial court, an incredible amount of flattery was showed upon the families of the poets and actors. In return for their efforts, the host bestowed his favours upon his entertainers ; and many a stranger, whose art had obtained him the entry into a Roman family, enjoyed marks of tender intimacy and affection from the hands of the mistress of the house. Those whose tastes lay in that direction, sought distraction in the skill of the juggler and the conjurer ; so that the adroit fellows among the foreigners who came to Rome also met with a good reception and found favour and money. The Roman loved the pulsing life about him in its pleasantness and charm, even if he had little understanding for rare art. " Always be merry " was the universal refrain, and it was reflected in every expression and gesture of the Roman at his festive board, and repeated, in their own way, by the marble fauns and nymphs in the banqueting-hall.

There was no place where the artist felt so much at home as he did in Rome. The foreign artists were soon so much at home that they took firm root there. They expressed this home feeling by founding an empire association from the various itinerant unions and thereby assured themselves of a livelihood. Rome became the meeting-place of the central association, where the compositions of the poets and actors were produced for the first time, preparatory to further performances in the provinces.

And so the confusion of races in Rome grew steadily greater. After a while there were more foreigners there than Romans. Rome had become the world.

There was always something to attract the eye—a circus, an exhibition, or an itinerant show, foreign envoys from Asia and Africa, arriving in pomp, with retinues composed of hundreds of men in native costume ; or detachments of the imperial bodyguard, sweeping through the streets on their fleet chargers—blond Germans, blue-eyed, of great stature, in their own distinctive dress ; soldiers from every part of the world in the most varied uniforms ; levies of auxiliary troops from the provinces ; a play of colour in streets and squares, as if the world were celebrating eternal carnival in every kind of disguise. Here come tattooed Britons, turbaned Egyptians, trousered Gauls, and, in their midst, the Roman in his toga ; a body of philosophers, long-bearded, enveloped in rough cloaks and wearing sandals . . . . The learned man, moving along with slow tread, has not heard the shout of the Moor ; the Nubian slave carrying his master's books is obliged to drag him to one side, for he would otherwise be instantly knocked down by the animals racing along behind.

There was no end to the traffic. Funerals, removals, processions of priests, the fire brigades—which were often called out—riders on horseback, often galloping along in whole squadrons, added yet more confusion to the picture presented by the streets of the metropolis. The lanes, streets, and markets were uproarious with shouts and cries, pedlars crying their wares, crowds forming in front of the shops, men shouting items of news which speedily drew the mob together and held up the traffic. In a side street a fresh commotion breaks out, and once more traffic is interrupted. A piece of cheese has fallen into the mud. The owner's curses attract the attention of the crowd, which anxiously hurries to the spot, to dissolve again in laughter once its curiosity is satisfied. The city takes as much notice of trifles as it does of serious events.

The street belonged to everyone. Men traded, chaffered, sang, bawled, loved, hated, drank, and joked in it ; they fashioned objects of art, prayed and philosophized there. In many thoroughfares, the shops, like the taverns, thrust a sort of annex right out into the street ; the wine booth, a perforated marble bench on which the great earthenware vessels, filled with wine, stand in readiness for the customer, their pointed ends thrust into the sand, has long been part of the street ; almost every booth has a counter attached in front ; here a money-changer rattles his coins on the table in front of his house ; there a goldsmith hammers in the thick of the traffic. The street is the home of the itinerant trader.

A wandering barber invites the passer-by to be shaved ; he skips nimbly over to the nearest tavern for a stool, sets it down in the street and begins to shave.

A group of young people call a halt, and begin to perform a play. Before a tavern fire-eaters and acrobats go through their tricks. Trained animals, prophesying and talking birds are displayed. An old man with a long beard assumes the airs of a rhapsodist and begins to sing epics in the middle of the street. Hawkers come to blows, because one has interferred with another's trade in old clothes. There are cries of " Roast apples ! " " Chestnuts ! " " Hot sausages ! "

—every time in a different key. A sausage dealer has hit upon the idea of setting up his travelling kitchen right across the street. Everyone stops, everyone presses forward . . . . “ All Rome had become a great tavern, every street was invaded by shopkeepers and traders, butchers, refreshment-stall keepers and barbers ; not a single doorstep was to be seen . . . . Praetors were forced to walk in the muddy road.” It not infrequently happened that people were crushed to death in the pressure of the dense crowd.

On one occasion, as the people were flocking in masses to the theatre, the Emperor Caligula, who could not sleep for the noise, sent out slaves armed with cudgels into the street. Numbers of people, crushed to death, were left lying on the ground—and there were senators among them.

At nightfall dangerous characters swarmed the streets. Drunken men reeled out of the taverns ; within, the prostitutes were boisterous. The tavern was often but a brothel in disguise. In front of the pleasure-houses in the Forum and elsewhere naked prostitutes enticed the idler and the curious ; swarms of women and girls were there in quest of men who would pay them well, among them even women who by day played the virtuous matron ; ruffians filled the streets with noise and shouting ; thieves and robbers lay in wait for their victims, and did not shrink from murder in the darkness of the streets.

Side by side with all the incredible luxury and splendour, the wealth, extravagance, passion for greatness and gain, poverty and distress were also rife in the world city. Disappointment and disillusionment may have dragged many a stranger, whose hopes were not immediately fulfilled upon his arrival, down into the depths or driven him into the whirlpool of bad company. Many were the unemployed who came to Rome. “ Where every man has possessions, so will he also, who makes his way to Rome, attain something." The city whose watchword was sensual pleasure, was dangerous to the man of weak character. Many lost all their money or ruined their health in debauchery, others saved themselves by taking to fraud or to well-paid denunciation.

An international company of rogues throve in Rome at the expense of other men.

Lucan described Rome as being " not so much populated by her own citizens as by the lees of the whole world ". Were things really ordered thus, in the palmy days of Rome, when, according to Martial—" The upright, trustworthy, man could not possibly count upon an assured existence ; still less might anyone who was neither a pander, a boon companion, a common informer or spy, who did not seduce the wife of a friend, sell his love to old women, purvey tattle about the imperial palace or hire himself out as a paid applauder to musicians, hope for success ? " A man with experience of life in the capital might well say " What shall I do in Rome ? Live by fraud ? I never learnt how. Play the false prophet ? That I cannot and will not do. Look for employment at the hands of seducers of women, perhaps, and render them clandestine service ? I will leave that to others who understand such things better. No thief will have me as his accomplice ; therefore I will leave this place. For who enjoys any sort of recognition nowadays without being privy to dark deeds which must be kept secret ? "

He who saw marble palaces before him whose owners gave themselves up to extravagant enjoyment of life's magnificence and splendour, and himself had nothing beyond the craving to play the prodigal with his own life, did not often boggle at the means which would procure him a life of luxury. " Happy the rich man, who does not need to pursue dishonest ways " ; such was the rogue's philosophy of life.

The age was one of bitter epigrams: "In the lowly, dice and adultery are disgraceful. The rich men who indulge in these things are called gay and brilliant."

But who is rich? He who dwells in villas pannelled in gold and ivory, and sleeps on purple cushions? Who has fresh fish-sauces from Byzantium and preserved fruit from Spain sent for every meal, and partakes of ragouts of ostrich brain or of the tongues of talking birds and flamingoes? Who cannot live without the dish invented by Aelius Varus, the pasty of "pheasants, peacocks, boar's flesh or sow's udder, and ham, prepared by a cook who costs more a year than a triumph because he knows more than fifty ways of cooking the wild and the tame pig?" Is he rich, who "spews in order to eat, and eats in order to spew, and will not even take the trouble to digest meals which have been assembled from all parts of the earth?" Who is such a critical judge, that he "can tell at the first bite from which particular coast an oyster comes?" Or whose tongue is burnt by the Falernian wine, as he rolls luxuriously on his festive couch of roses? Rich, who preens himself in purple stripes and hyacinth-coloured cloaks? Or who sits at a citron table, a superbly grained disk from the stem of the citron tree—the Tree of Life, which grows near the Atlas mountains and so seldom attains the necessary thickness for tables?

Life, and life alone, is rich. He who knows how to take advantage of the riches of life is master among men. It makes no difference whether material wealth is his or not. But it is not everyone who is in a position to be as extravagant as he pleases with the riches of his life without causing others to suffer. What did Felix Bulla, the robber-captain, do? What could he not have done if fate had treated him differently?

"Felix Bulla, at the head of six hundred robbers, ravaged all Italy. But he was neither seen when he was seen, nor found when he was found, nor seized when he was taken prisoner. For he was cunning, and shrewd enough to be generous. He knew when people journeyed forth from Rome, fell upon them, took away part of their money, and then sent them on their way ; the craftsmen, however, he held back for a time in order that he might have workmen, paid them well, and then set them free. When two of his comrades were taken prisoner and condemned to fight with wild beasts, he went to the gaoler, gave himself out as the highest official in the district, who needed such people for his shows, and played his part so well that the prisoners were handed over to him. He offered his services as guide to the captain who had been sent out against him, and lured him into an ambush. There he disclosed his identity, had the prisoner's head shaved, and bade him tell his master the Emperor to look after his slaves better if he wanted to prevent them from becoming robbers. Indeed, he had some imperial slaves in his band, some of whom had been badly paid and others not at all." At last, through the treachery of one of his mistresses, they succeeded in catching this cunning outlaw asleep in a cave. When Bulla was led before the prefect, the latter asked him : "Why are you a robber ?" To which the robber retorted with a sneer, "Well, why are you a prefect ?" They had Bulla torn to pieces by wild beasts in expiation of the robber-deeds in which his abundant energy had found expression.

Alexander the Great had had more vision than the officials of Rome. For when Diomedes, the notorious sea-robber, who had ravaged the coasts and made havoc of shipping, being captured and led before him, replied to his question, "Why are you a pirate ?" with the answer "If I could make war like you, then I should be a king like you," Alexander changed his fate and awarded him a post in keeping with his ability.

While an abundance of human energy was wasted in the metropolis, many lived in utter destitution.

The man without initiative was betrayed and sold even when he had possessions. If he had none, then he was forlorn among men. What was the fate of the forlorn in Rome ? " They live in gloomy chambers reached by two hundred steps. Here lies a verminous mat, a heap of straw, a bare bedstead ; there stands a cold hearth, a pitcher with a broken handle. That is all the furniture they have. They drink vinegary wine and eat black bread with garlic, onions, turnips, peas and lentils. A pig's head, stewed with leeks, represents a feast . . . . Let us look closely at Rome when the first of July comes—the great day for moving house ! The landlord distrains. A pale, emaciated man, with three women, as shrewish-looking as Megara, leave the house ; their belongings consist of a bedstead with three, and a table with two legs, and other odds and ends, bits of crockery, a fire-pan covered with verdigris, a piece of cheese, a saucepan smelling of bad fish, and an old bunch of pennyroyal."

How many of those who were destitute of goods yet rich in energy attained, like the simple barber Cinnamus, through their ingenuity—or was it luck ?—to possessions in such profusion as to rival the aristocrats and cause the satirist's " dry liver to glow with rage " ? Fortune is capricious. Men are sent into the world, equipped with abilities to shape their life. Human destinies meet, cross, become knotted together. This man rises and attracts universal attention ; that man falls, is disregarded, and the feet of the others pass over him as over a worm. Wide were the distances which separated men from one another in Rome, the metropolis. Yet no one was prevented from lessening the gaps, or leaping over them. The disparities, however, were not obliterated on that account. They are always there, in possessions and capabilities, wherever numbers of men of all nations are gathered together.

In one thing, however, the members of the mixed community of Rome were identical—in their craving to enjoy life. In this respect there was no difference between them, from the Emperor down to the humblest proletarian. Life—at any price!

> "Fashion me with a palsied hand,
> Weak of foot, and a cripple;
> Build upon me a crook-backed hump;
> Shake my teeth till they rattle;
> All is well, if life remains.
> Let me but live, I'll pay
> The price with a martyr's cross." [1]

Thus did an extremely rich man of Rome, Maecenas, friend of the Emperor Augustus and patron of the poet Horace, express himself.

Life for life's sake! was their motto; to seek for ever fresh excitement, find Life in its obscurest lair! Rome needed always the whip of sensation.

The people of Rome had become accustomed to the life of the streets and the squares, no matter how magnificent and glittering, or, on the other side, how revolting and often terrifying it was—it had come to be their everyday world. The circus! It was there that life ran wild. In the circus the life force must strain every nerve, or it must become its own enemy and destroy itself. "Here comes the procession!"—the spectators whisper to one another breathlessly. The master of the games has conducted the great procession from the Capitol: marching at its head across the great market, the Forum, threading his way between the shops lining the business quarter to the cattle market, he leads it into the circus.

"Think and say nothing, that everything may pass off well!" With musicians in front, the procession flows in through the great central gate, marches the entire length of the circus, round the pillars at the ends, and then retires from the arena. In flowing purple, gold-edged toga, a consul stands erect. He swings the ivory sceptre with the eagle, exposing his tunic, embroidered with palm leaves. A slave stands behind him, holding a great wreath of golden oak-leaves richly studded with jewels, over his head. In the procession the images of all the gods are displayed on cars drawn by horses and elephants.

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[1] Seneca, *Epist.* 101 (*Maecenas*). (1925. Loeb Classical Library.)

The soldiers among the spectators applaud, when the statue of the god of war drives past ; the husbandmen wave their hands to the statue of Ceres ; the artists shout, as the statue of Minerva approaches ; everyone calls upon his patron saint. As Venus passes in her golden car, all the women and maidens and all the lovers are clamorous with delight.

The poet Ovid has recorded his impression of the moment : " Venus, favour my desire ; grant, that my new mistress will let me love her. Lo ! Venus nods and beckons—she has heard me."

The festal procession has left the circus. Attention is riveted upon the games. Eutychus—Fortune's favourite—whose skill in driving was highly admired by the Emperor Caligula, comes in with his quadriga through the entrance between two pillars. He stands erect in his low-hung, two-wheeled car, the driving reins made fast in his loins by a broad belt. He has never yet made use of the sharp knife in his belt to sever the reins, for he is not afraid of accidents. Head and temples are covered by a close-fitting cap, his short dress flutters in the rush of air, his bare arms move with a play and ripple of taut muscles. His opponent of the blue party has entered by way of the left gate. He himself is in green. Eutychus, racing alongside the low wall in the middle of the circus, has already gained the goal at the end of the course. But Blue is pressing him hard. The crowd shouts ; it wants Green to win. The course is renewed, up the track and down again and up and down once more, rounding the goals each time. " Eutychus ! " roars the crowd.

Everyone is yelling. Eutychus of the green party *must* win. There is betting on the drivers. The blue or the green—which is to be first over the chalk line after the seventh circuit ?

The flutes scream shrilly. The horses take fright and increase their pace. Blazing torches flicker in the air of the arena. The chariots tear along at breakneck speed. Everyone is calling, shouting, screaming, bawling, clapping. Men spring forward, waving glaring colours to goad the maddened animals to still further effort, others leap into the arena and dance frantically as they approach, so that the play of passions communicates itself to the horses. In the crowd, men curse and swear at one another. A backer of the green punches a blue partisan in the ribs. Quarrels break out. Excitement is at fever pitch. Everyone is on his feet.

" Eutychus! " The vast arena rings with tumultuous applause. Eutychus has won !

But who has won ? For to the crowd the rival parties were only the means to a personal victory, to gain or loss, so keen was the public participation in the games that men would wager the glory of the empire that this party would win and the other assuredly lose !

Ovid, the poet of love, at the circus with his girl, has his own wishes too, like the crowd, who would have given much less to know who ruled the world than to be certain which side was to be victorious, the blue or the green. The wish of the poet's mistress has been fulfilled ; his victory, however, has yet to be entreated. What does he care about blue or green ? . . . The girl glances at the poet, her laughing eyes half-closed and full of promise of the victory he so desires.

The chariot races in the circus often lasted for days. The victor became very rich, and was regarded as a sacred being ; woe betide the man who ventured to reprove him, when he took undue liberties with public decency and order in the streets or public places !

Was it to be wondered at that Rome had a considerable number of statues of racing charioteers? Trick riders career round the arena, leaping at racing speed from the back of one horse to another, with fleet foot-runners in between ;—it is a mad hurry and tumble, yet disciplined by trained strength and skill. However, men saw these things in Rome all too often. They were more interested in horse-racing. "The horses, bred in Roman possessions in Italy and Sicily, those brought over from the pastures of Greece, and the African and Moorish steeds—especially those Spanish-bred in Africa—ran hundreds and thousands of times. The public knew the best horses by name. The name of the most famous poet in Rome was not so often mentioned as that of the race-horse Andraemon; it was the talk of the town, when Tigris or Passerinus was to run; men greeted each other with a word in praise of Victor and Tuscus, the winners of hundreds of races."

The lust of life grew with every fresh series of circus games. Like a wave it rose,—and then overflowed into cruelty, the passion where life and death meet.

In festal array, bedecked like beasts of sacrifice, urged on in droves, the gladiators march through the arena. "*Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant!*" In his robes of state, the Imperator sits in a box resplendent with gold and precious stones. With him are the members of the imperial family. There sits Messalina, too, at the side of her imperial consort, and watches life bleeding, for all that she has such a different idea of it in her mind.

All classes delighted in the amphitheatre; the senators, the knights and the third order with its innumerable proletarians.

In the foremost of the tiers, which ascended in semi-circles, sat the senators, the patricians, in robes of office, the high dignitaries of the monarchy, foreign princes, legates; all richly clad and wearing the highest insignia of their rank. The sacred virgins, the *vestales*, also had their seats in the foremost row, to see the bloody spectacle. The other marble seats were occupied by staid citizens and their wives, in ceremonial dress. The ragtag and bobtail, however, sat at the very top. Well over forty thousand people looked on, tense with a common emotion. The arena was superbly decorated. At the marriage feast of life with death every fantasy must be made a reality.

What happens now is indeed reality. No dream or fable could depict anything more terrible than what takes place in the amphitheatre.

Two men, who do not know one another, have never seen one another, fight with lethal weapons to the death. The Emperor wills it. The people will it. Two, four, six, eight, a hundred pairs stand facing one another with sword and shield, to cut one another to pieces, to whet human lust. First, to the strains of music, comes a sham fight. Now the sinister tuba drones : " To battle ! " The trumpets and the horns blare. The scream of the flute mingles with the piercing shriek of the whistle,—a widely exciting accompaniment to the rage of battle. Blood flows in streams, the severely-wounded, the dead and the dying sink to the ground. The crowd shouts and roars in its enthusiasm. The masses are in ecstasy, in orgasms of lust. Blood, blood, and more blood ! Martyrdom and torment ! Death gives life ! The downtrodden people desire a life incentive. The sacrificial slaughter of animals is too insignificant and too familiar. Men must hew one another to pieces with practised hands. They must, taut in every nerve, cast their life at the feet of Death and endeavour to wrest it back from him. That fans the flame of life in the mass of blunted sensibilities from the front seat of honour at the foot of the amphitheatre to the last at the very top.

Blond Germans are engaged in combat with swarthy Moors, Grecian with Persian, all nations are fighting against one another as gladiators, all with the accoutrements and weapons peculiar to them, on foot, on horseback, in chariots.

The air is strident with the clash of swords and their heavy thudding upon the shields.

The mob is delirious with enthusiasm. People shout and scream, take sides, scold and curse when they think a gladiator has bungled his work. Rome is bound up with the circus and its games, and glows with fierce passion for this bloody entertainment.

A voice from the crowd roars : " How badly that fellow dies ! " An attendant is already on the scene and gives the stricken, dying gladiator the death-stroke.

Any gladiator who escaped the carnage came in for the long knife of the attendant responsible for clearing up the arena, unless he could manage to get away. If he was overcome, and could not, the crowd decided his fate. The scarves fluttered—he might live. The thumbs of the multitude pointed downwards—he was put to death. If a man fought listlessly, the spectators flew into a rage and shouted : " Whip him, brand him with red-hot irons, kill him ! " The attendant obeyed the crowd, which was the tyrant of the amphitheatre. The corpses were removed swiftly, in order not to delay the continuation of the show. Men masked as gods of the nether world carried them off on biers through the " Gates of the Goddess of Death ". Outside, the attendants experimented with hot irons, to see if they were all dead ; those who showed any sign of life, were quickly stabbed to death. The game is over: Death has kept Carnival. The arena is raked over and sprinkled with fresh sand : a new contest is to begin.

A gladiator, weary and covered with wounds, hastens over to his master and asks if he is to fight on. A word of encouragement revives his contempt of death. He will prove himself a strong man in the sight of Rome, and, summoning up his last reserves of strength, he begins the struggle anew. When he shows signs of waning resistance, an approving nod comes from his master, and the gladiator no longer heeds his wounds, or knows pain ; he fights on, dies or conquers, for his professional pride will not allow him to do otherwise.

Who were the victims, who were doomed to die for the amusement of a rabble, and of an Emperor? Prisoners of war, slaves, criminals of all sorts, and others recruited for the purpose. The Emperor Claudius, Messalina's husband, had often condemned a man to the gladiator's fate merely because he had committed a theft. Wealthy Romans maintained schools of gladiators, and subjected the pupils to the strictest training in swordsmanship in order to enter them for the big games. Occasionally, they sold gladiators for games outside Rome.

"Alas," complained a trained fighter who was cooped up in a gladiators' school and given no chance of a fight, "what a waste of precious years!"

When, however, in the weariness of his mind, one of these began to reflect, and, looking at the slave's dress which he wore, realized to the full the shamefulness of a gladiator's life, he was seized with horror. Memories of his childhood and early youth stirred within him. He saw, in his mind, all the dear ones who used to be round him and, before him, nothing but captivity, want, misery, and baseness . . . How different it might all have been! "Revolt!" And Spartacus broke out of the swordsmen's school, his companions in misery with him. The slaves rose, and all Italy trembled before the band of creatures who wished to be men again. But when flight and revolt were impossible, the men who claimed the rights of free human beings knew how to evade the tyrant's lust. A gladiator was put into a cart about to leave for the amphitheatre. But he resolved not to be a sight for the sensation-mongering rabble, and on the way, he thrust his head out of the cart so far that it was caught in the spokes of the big wheel, and thus gained eternal freedom.

A whole gang of pirates—men who in their day had enjoyed freedom from all restraint—who had been taken prisoners and condemned to the gladiatorial contest, strangled one another on the day before the games. When the attendant came to fetch them, he found only corpses. Thus the master remained master, even when he must wear the slave's dress, and in that dress mocked the slave who wore the master's dress.

The Emperor and the magnates of the empire introduced the gladiatorial games in the amphitheatres because they stood in need of the people's goodwill. At a certain performance a spectator once hissed the actor Pylades. The resourceful artist at once stopped and pointed his finger at the discontented one. The audience laughed loudly, and it was now the hisser's turn to be hissed at from all parts of the house. The Emperor Augustus was indignant when he heard of the incident, and sent for the actor to warn and punish him. But Pylades boldly retorted to an Emperor who courted the mob—"It is to your advantage, great Caesar, that the public should concern itself with us."

On the other hand, it was the Emperor's purpose, while gratifying his own lust for blood, to use the games as a means of manifesting to the people his sovereign will. Behind the idle hours glowing with excitement, the Emperor gradually strengthened his position, which was to become that of permanent and absolute overlord and dictator. The people were dazzled and won over by sensual delights ; they did not know that the arena games were a game of the rulers with them—the people. The people were much occupied with the gladiators, and at banquets, in the intervals of shows, on walks, in the taverns, the athletes and fighters were favourite subjects of conversation. The day came when the gladiators, adjudged by law as men without honour, stood so high in honour that an Emperor himself (Commodus) took part in the gladiatorial games. Ladies of the ancient nobility and even of the imperial house had love affairs with gladiators. Inscriptions were to be seen, scratched on the walls and news-pillars, to the effect that the gladiators were " the pride and heart's desire of the women ". Ironic truth called the gladiator " the little girls' master and physician ". Indeed, women pressed to be allowed to take part in the sword games. No wonder, therefore, that later on women were condemned to fight in the gladiatorial games—amongst others the Gothic women who, in men's dress, had taken part in the war against Rome. These, after their capture, were led with bound hands in triumphal procession to the capital and there, in the combats of the arena, exposed to the spectacular lust of the multitude. Thousands and thousands of human beings, high and low, rich and poor, were fascinated by the sanguinary games in the amphitheatre. It seemed as though every man lost his personality during these contests, and became the slave of some strange compelling force.

St. Augustine tells of a young man who was a Christian and of good morals . . . " He was one day met by divers of his acquaintance . . . and they with a familiar violence haled him, though vehemently refusing, into the Amphitheatre . . . he thus protesting : " Though you drag my body to that place, and there set me, you cannot force me to turn my mind or my eyes to those shows. I shall be absent while present, and so shall overcome both you and them . . . ' " He tried to do as he said, but . . . " a mighty cry of the people caused by some incident in the fight, struck his ear, and, overcome by curiosity . . . he opened his eyes—and was stricken forthwith, says Augustine, with a deeper wound in his soul than was the other, whom he desired to behold, in his body ; and he fell more miserably than he upon whose fall that mighty noise was raised . . . as he saw that blood, he drank savagery therewith . . . and was . . . intoxicated with the bloody pastime . . . He looked, shouted, became excited, and carried thence with him the madness which would goad him to return. . . ."[1]

Things never seen before, or never heard, overwhelm the soul and stifle judgment ; the itch for what is monstrous tears the senses like a scourge that whips up madness from every corner, or else it deadens passion until the spectacle is witnessed in a mood of devout ecstasy.

The effect of the stupendous development of pomp in the amphitheatre, the immense structure itself, the multitude of spectators, all equally eager, whose tense anticipation gave way to ever more uncontrollable outbursts with the progress of the games, was so irresistible that finally every man was imbued with the selfsame mania.

Originally held on a small scale in the open—in the Forum, the gladiatorial games had been greatly developed by Cæsar and other rulers who stood much in need of the public favour, until finally the huge edifice of the amphitheatre, a monument to human strength and human weakness, was completed. And with every new addition—like a habit which degenerates with the course of time—the demand for further innovations grew. What was the nature of the people who flocked to the amphitheatre in surging crowds ? What had they done with their lives before, and how had they treated those of others ? For hundreds of years the Romans, a most warlike people, had been used to bloodshed. Decades before the imperial era they conducted great campaigns in all parts of the world, and finally waged internecine warfare within their own borders. Chronic civil wars, in which brothers and kinsmen cut each other down, revolutionary outbreaks, proscriptions involving the sacrifice of hundreds and thousands of the worthiest, had made men callous in Rome.

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[1] *Confessions*, Bk. vi.

What remained, when no man knew whether his own life were safe until the morrow or whether a bloody end would not overtake him too, when men could see daily a row of heads exposed to view in the Forum and realize with horror that this or that human being whose bleeding head was impaled there was yesterday his guest or his friend—his father, brother, or son? Nothing but to cry, " Away with all reflection ! Remember nothing ! To the games, the games ! New games, new sensations ! " Almost every spectator in the amphitheatre had, by reason of the wars, himself come to be a murderer, had ruthlessly dealt out torment and martyrdom, and known agony in his own person ; had become an incendiary, robber, or thief, and lost all feeling for the life of others. Now that there was peace, how were men such as those who in a single night had razed to the ground a flourishing city like Amisia on the Black Sea, the highly civilized daughter of Athens, murdered every single one of her inhabitants, and completely destroyed or pillaged their possessions —how were such men to be held in check at home otherwise than by blood, especially now that everything was regulated once more by high authority, even the arena games? Now the multitude and its leaders sat as spectators on marble benches, as before a mirror, and stared at the fights as at their own passions, which they had formerly unleashed to the undoing of their foes, doing it too with the comforting assurance that their own lives were safe. Not otherwise could Rome, shaken and distracted in her whole life, find peace again. Whoever takes poison as an anodyne, to drive other poison out of his system, gets a craving for poison. Ever larger quantities and more powerful poisons must be taken to neutralize the pernicious effects of the first dose.

The skill of practised swordsmen, making blood spurt from human bodies—what was that compared with the ferocity of wild beasts instinctively using their teeth, claws, and strength as weapons ?

Animal against animal ! The trap-door in the arena is thrown open, and tigers, panthers, and leopards rush into the enclosure. Harried by firebrands hurled at them, prodded with iron spikes, their rage is fanned to a flame, and they leap at one another, tear one another to pieces. The spectators are in a state of frantic excitement. The elephant fights the rhinoceros, the bear the bull : the bull is goaded into attacking the elephant, the lion the bear. Strength against strength, cunning against cunning. Some animals are lashed together with ropes to infuriate them.

The Emperor Claudius, Messalina's husband, took immense delight in wild beast shows. He got Thessalians to ride wild bulls round the circus ; as the beasts tired, the riders had to jump on to their necks and drag them down by the horns for slaughter. A squadron of his bodyguard, under their own officers, had to fight African panthers in the amphitheatre. The Emperors soon outran the public desire for ever new sights of blood.

Hundreds and hundreds of animals—on one occasion eleven thousand—raged in the arena. Every kind of wild animal known to the conquered countries of Africa, Asia, Gaul, Spain and Germany was procured for the capital. " Soon," said a writer of the time in Rome, " so many beasts will have been caught in their native country and brought to Rome, that in those parts of Africa where once the lion terrified the herds there will be grazing grounds for the tame cattle, and the Egyptians will be able to gather their crops in safety by the waters of the Nile, as no hippopotamus will be there to disturb them any more ".

Always blood and more blood ! The blood of animals and men ! Rome's blood-thirst was insatiable. Criminals under sentence of death had to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheatre. The execution of justice must be transformed into a sensational spectacle. There is a man tied to a stake, and there another nailed to a cross. The mob was curious to know how a tiger or panther would attack these victims.

The murderous crowd would yell with excitement as the beasts tore a man's limbs from his body piece by piece. To prolong his agonizing conflict with death, the doomed man was given a weapon—a sword or dagger—to use against the beast selected to kill him. It was not long, however, before the fight with wild beasts, like the gladiatorial contests, became a form of sport.

On one occasion the mob was moved. But it was not at the sight of the sufferings which these mentally and physically tortured and mortally-wounded men had to display before their avid eyes. Apion of Alexandria, an eye-witness, has written an account of it. A slave was condemned to be torn to pieces by wild beasts because he had run away from his master. Androcles—such was his name—stood in the arena with ten thousand faces gaping at him. The gate opened, out dashed a lion, which gazed round the arena, and then made towards Androcles. But behold ! The lion stared at Androcles, and remained motionless before him. The animal recognized him. While he was yet a free man in his home in Africa, Androcles had come upon the animal howling with pain in the desert. A thorn was deeply embedded in its paw, which it could not use. Androcles took pity on the poor beast, and removed his thorn for him. It was the same animal which now stood before him. The fight was over before it had begun. Androcles was questioned. The incredible story was written on a board, and this was carried round the circus for the information of the crowd. The multitude broke into tumultous applause, and demanded pardon and freedom for this Androcles. Androcles tied the lion to a thin rope, and led him from one tavern in Rome to another, being welcomed everywhere he went, and the lion bedecked with flowers.

But the remarkable incident of Androcles and the lion was nothing to the Romans but a mere sensation. Something unprecedented was what the people of Rome wished to see. Consequently, one day the people vented their scorn on the Emperor Claudius who, in his inveterate absence of mind, had directed the herald in the circus to invite them to games " which no living being had ever seen, or would ever see again ", although his predecessor had inaugurated those very games and there were spectators among the crowd who had been present, not to mention actors who had played a part in them. Rome needed ever fresh excitement to make the nerves tingle. Every phase, possibility and jealously-guarded secret of life must be revealed for the delectation of the senses. The age of Messalina was that of a nerve-racking game with life.

Life was hunted, whipped, incessantly goaded. It must flee, hide, that men might track it, lure it from its retreat, titillate it, hold it fast, beat it or caress it. Men racked and tortured life in every conceivable way and gloated over its torment ; cast it out, in order to seek it ; threw it down, that they might raise it up again, and let it soar jubilant to the heights. Men sucked the blood of life from its veins, then revived it with spicy morsels. Men killed life—to delight in its resurrection. It was an age of extreme artificiality. Nor was life allowed to display itself in the forms which Nature demanded. They drove wretched ostriches coloured scarlet round the circus, hung plates of gold on them, some two hundred in number, and gilded their horny feet . . . Human beings distorted their souls and wrinkled their faces into masks.

Ever fresh attractions had to come, like repeated blows, to revive interest in brutish, jaded souls.

On a high column stands a man, with great feathered wings buckled on his arms. He is to enact the death flight of the legendary Icarus. With a sweep he spreads his wings, springs upwards and outwards into the air—and lies, dashed to pieces, on the earth. Another, his body enveloped in flames and frantic with pain, tears through the arena . . . The torments of Hercules, whose jealous wife Deianeira gave him a garment which burned his mighty frame, were staged to provide the mob with new thrills. All the punishments suffered by evil-doers in the nether world were reproduced in the circus one after another. And after each performance there was tumultuous applause.

The games were held as a matter of course, necessary to the people like their daily bread. "*Panem et circenses* !" "Caesar, give us bread and games !" cried the people. "Be it as you will." He caused the vast arena to be filled with water, and a naval battle to be represented.

Everything was real. Sea creatures swam about in the water, a fleet with two thousand oarsmen and a thousand soldiers battled with one another, the tuba sounded, horns blared, swords clashed, javelins hurtled, blood spurted. The people were delirious with enthusiasm. Enough ! The water was run off. Forthwith a battle began on dry land, with butchery and shrieks. The people needed bread, the Emperor their favour. The land battle was scarcely over, the corpses dragged off, and the arena hurriedly cleaned up, before thousands sat down to feast and carouse at immense banqueting-tables, holding their revels on the very spot where an hour before death had celebrated a triumph before their eyes.

In Rome the extremes of life stood very close together, ever threatening to meet in ruin.

Life was a game, almost a wager. The will to Die is mocked by the will to Live ; but the love of life is everywhere overborne by the lust for death. A sparkling and a flashing of " No" and " Yes ", of Death and Life, of " to be " and " not to be ". Death must be the spur to life. Life is only fit for death. Life at its highest stands, as it were, on a see-saw.

Caligula, who had a mania for blood, ordered his executioners always to put their victims to death by a succession of light cuts : " Strike so that he *feels* his death," he would say. It was he who kissed his mistress's throat and said " What a beautiful neck ! And yet, if I say the word, the executioner's sword will shear it through ! " He was a man who would spare nothing, and, when the mood was on him, he would throw Caesonia, the voluptuous, provocative woman whom he passionately loved, stark naked into the arms of his friends. " Caesonia ! " he would shout at her, when she fixed her burning gaze challengingly on him, who so desired her, " Caesonia ! —if I have to torture you, I will find out why it is that I love you so ! " And Caligula's passion for his favourite Caesonia grew ever stronger with time.

The age was one of sadistic cruelty. Love of life and a fierce desire to destroy it swung the pendulum back and fro in serious things and vain ones alike. The pointer on the scales of life must never indicate anything ; everything must always be in movement. Thus life became lust and love an instrument of torture. The spirit of the age eddied restlessly. This was as evident in sexual life as in the great events. The love songs of the poet Ovid have become a mirror of the age. " Shall I then fear nothing ? Shall I sleep without sighing ? " says Ovid. Life became a torment when it had to be quiescent. " What follows me, that I flee ; what flees from me, that will I pursue."

Change was the spice of life. Everything had to be hunted out, and must flee deviously, that capture might yield delight.

" He who can love the wife of a foolish man
Is like a thief who steals sand from a dreary, deserted shore."

" Such fools of men ! If you will not look after your wives for your own sakes, then do it for mine ! I want to be tempted."

There were no placid citizens in Rome. Alarms, agitations, insults must make men's hearts thrill with excitement, from the dwellers in the imperial palace down to the love-lorn little girls and their gallants.

" What good is happiness to me unless it cheats me ? "

" Dissemble, involve me in intrigues, let me dangle in uncertainty, wheedle something out of me, hurt me, contrive something which may drive me to my death. I want to be deceived, but don't tell me of your deceptions. I want to hope and fear at once ; then only will love be the acme of delight ! "

Thus spoke Ovid, the poet, who at that time was *praeceptor amoris* and did not fail to describe in verse all the arts of love and how to make ever fresh discoveries therein.

—No rest ! If one girl is not enough to ruin me, then let there be two ! I will try conclusions with them—desire gives strength ! To have to play off one maid against another with the aid of little fibs makes the veins thrill pleasantly and the heart vibrate.

—Eros must let himself be beaten with rods. That inspires him with the lust of conquest and drives him on to success.

The poet engages in a little erotic fencing-bout with Cypassis, the dusky handmaid of his lady-love, Mistress Corinna. He desires to entice her into his arms again, but she is apprehensive of her mistress. The skirmish opens with gentle reproaches of Cypassis, but stronger weapons are gradually introduced to ensure love's victory.

"Cypassis, that a thousand wayes trim'st haire,
Worthy to keembe none but a Goddesse faire,
Our pleasant scapes shew thee no clowne to be,
Apt to thy mistresse, but more apt to me:
Who that our bodies were comprest bewrayde?
Whence knows Corinna that with thee I playde?
Yet blusht I not, nor used I any saying,
That might be urg'd to witness our false playing.
What if a man with bond-women offend,
To prove him foolish did I ere contend?
Achilles burnt with face of captive Briseis,
Great Agamemnon lov'd his servant Chriseis.
Greater than these my selfe I not esteeme,
What graced Kings, in mee no shame I deeme,
But when on thee her angry eyes did rush,
In both thy cheekes she did perceive thee blush,
But being present, might that worke the best,
By Venus Deity how did I protest.
Thou Goddesse doest commande a warme South-blast,
My false oathes in Carpathian seas to cast.
For which good turne my sweete reward repay,
Let me lie with thee, brown Cypasse, to-day.
Ungrate why feignest new feares? and doest refuse;
Well maiest thou one thing for thy Mistress use.
If thou deniest foole, I'll our deeds expresse,
And as a traitour mine own fault confesse,
Telling thy mistress, where I was with thee,
How oft, and by what meanes we did agree." [1]

But the day before the poet had been extolling the loveliness of his Corinna's body:—

" . . .
Stark naked as she stood before mine eye,
Not one wen in her body could I spie,

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[1] *Amores*, Book II. (Trans. Christopher Marlowe).

> What armes and shoulders did I touch and see,
> How apt her breasts were to be prest by me.
>
> . . .
>
> To leave the rest, all liked me passing well,
>
> . . .
>
> Judge you the rest, being tir'd she bad me kisse,
> Jove send me more such after-noones as this." [1]

To-morrow the poet will sing the praises of Philomel, now that Cypassis has yielded to his will to-day.

Human life is justified only when it is productive of passion, says Rome—passion for might, wealth, love. If the way thither leads through danger, we will put life to the test. If it breaks, it was worthless, if it stands the test, then it will give strength to enjoy.

Every kind of horror was evoked. Everything had to be thrown out of balance. " If only an earthquake would come and swallow up men and cities, or some sweeping disaster overtake the armies . . ." exclaimed the Emperor Caligula—his daily hundreds of orders for blood and slaughter failing to satisfy him. Life was daily challenged for something new ; Life's conjurors were on every hand. Daring and rashness led to a reckless game with life such as had never been known before. The Emperor juggled with human heads. The populace was balanced on a perilous tight-rope.

Rome had become life's circus. Eros, the hunter of human game, himself the quarry of the animal, demanded orgies of lewdness and lascivious torments in his profligate destruction of life. Rome was drunk with life, and its senses reeled. Yet to the eyes of those who did not look below the surface, it presented an appearance of enduring stability and majesty.

In this city of unbridled excess, when every impulse roved at will and fought might and main for release ; where passions threatened by exhaustion had to be perpetually goaded on ; where the fear that life might be withholding hidden delights drove men to ruthlessness and violence—in this city of satiety and ever new craving for new interests, the city of the most reckless prodigality of every life force, Messalina grew up—a flower which in its singularity betrayed the garden which produced it . . .

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[1] *Ibid.*, Book I.

. . . .

" And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it . . ." says the writer of the Apocalypse, whom Eros led out of the oppressive atmosphere of material things into the higher kingdom of spiritual things and to the revelation of vision in the celestial city.

But Rome was the city of blood and earth.

II

DECADENCE

The child of a noble lady of Rome is playing in the grounds of its parents' villa on the hillside.

The garden is radiant in the sunlight, the sky is of cloudless blue, the green of the cypresses mingles with the passionate glow of red roses ; not far away is a laurel grove with a shell grotto, in front of which leaping water plays in the great sunken marble basin. The little one kneels in the sand before the water, which is full of bright-coloured little fishes, and follows their movements with delighted eyes. Suddenly she jumps and raises her little head ! One of the little fish has suddenly, as though startled, darted out of his retreat and given chase to another which has just swum slowly by. " Glycera ! " cries the child. The servant runs to the call. " They want to have a wedding." The servant looks questioningly at the child : " Who do ? " " They do," says the child. " This little fish was the man, he rushed after the girl."

But the little one is vexed, for she can no longer recognize her fish out of so many. She bursts into tears. " I wanted to see how they marry."

Glycera extricates herself from the group of servants and takes the child up. She walks on a good distance, in order to bring her charge well away from the perilous fountain, and comes to a marble bench, near which Paris and Helen, in the guise of marble statues, gleam in the sun.

" They want to marry too," says the child, pointing to the stone figures.

The servant lifts the little one on to her lap and, to quiet her, begins to tell a story : " Once upon a time there there was a king— " " King ? " interrupts the child. The maid continues : " —who was so rich that everything he had was of gold and precious stones. The plates, the chairs, the walls were all of gold and gleamed like the sun. But the king took no pleasure in these things, for he was alone. And so he sent messengers all over his kingdom to find the most beautiful woman."

The child puts her little hand over the servant's mouth. " I know," she says, " he came to me and took me away with him, and married me. I say ! I'm queen now. I can always marry now. Yes !—I can marry anybody I like now, can't I ? "

Meanwhile the child's mother has approached them, reclining in a resplendent litter borne by two swarthy slaves. She perceives the servant with the child ; instantly she seizes the whip of thorns which lies at her side in the litter and furiously belabours Glycera's half-naked back. Glycera bends low before her mistress, she knows that she has done wrong, is gravely at fault. For in this chance meeting with her mistress, the servant has noticed a handsome young man walking at the side of her mistress's litter. Glycera goes back with the child to the group of female slaves, while Anicia hastens up furtively to give her mistress a letter.

The lady begins to read, after she has bidden the young man to go and look at the nearest statue of Venus, in front of the tall rose-bushes, and then come back and tell her whether Venus has smiled on him or not. The young man hastens off to the statue, which is some distance away. On the way he pictures to himself the lovely face of the goddess, sees her laughing down at him ; he is soon there.

The lady has read the letter and, with instructions as to the route to be taken, gives the order to harness two thoroughbred horses at once to the best carriage —the gilded one with the silk curtains. As she leaves the litter Marcia, the young slave, who is on good terms with her mistress—she is of the same age, just over eighteen, too—comes up in haste and produces a small writing tablet from a fold in her dress. He who put the little tablet into Marcia's hands is waiting for an answer.

An expression of pleasure, which the servant understands, flits over the mistress's fresh young face. Marcia is allowed to smile with her mistress. The mistress says nothing, but rapidly scratches a sign on the little wax tablet. Marcia speeds away, showing the naked soles of her feet as she runs. The brown bearers set the litter on the ground. They have received the order that the coachman is not to drive to the house in the Circus Street, but to the Appian Way. The handsome young man with the freshly-waved curls has become very depressed ; the Venus statue did not smile upon him when he stood before it—the goddess's mouth was of stone and did not move. The bad omen for his love affair with the fair lady upset him so much that he decided to go back by a different way to that which he took to the goddess of love. And so it happened that he met the lady.

The young *domina*, hastening on with joyous, elastic steps, had almost gained her house, where she proposed to beautify herself for the tryst on the Appian Way, when the rejected of Venus crossed her path. The lady immediately relaxed into a sedate walk ; but her heart beat the more violently. With the deepest sympathy she inquired after the result of the meeting with the oracle, but without waiting for the reply, said : " Don't speak !—Never speak of disagreeable things. However, it's better so. I've a dreadful headache, it's come on all of a sudden. There, it's hammering at my temples, and I'm quite giddy. How very right of the goddess, the good Venus who feels for us women, to give no sign. Darling, dearest, the promised hour would have brought you no happiness. A woman with a headache !—My beloved, we shall meet again ! " Faintly, almost sighing, as it were, she added, " I'll go to bed," laughed inwardly in secret amusement, and left her lover standing.

The servants saw their mistress approaching—with her headache. " Alone, *domina* ? " Instantly three, four, ten of their number ran to her side, but she dismissed them all, even those whose duty it was to robe her and arrange her hair. Marcia, however, she took with her ; she alone should be present when she prepared herself for the nocturnal tryst. Supported by her favourite servant and confidante, the fair lady walked with drooping head towards the house. No sooner was she inside, however, than she cut a caper and ran merrily into her room for Marcia to dress her.

The child had been taken by Glycera to a remote corner of the garden. Glycera's back was still smarting from the effects of her scourging, but she laughed with the child, and tried to forget. In anticipation of the punishment which still awaited her she worked herself up to a pitch of gaiety, and determined that the child should share it. She took it by the arms, and, holding it loosely, lifted it up high ; then, as the child enjoyed the fun immensely, she tossed it higher and higher, catching it as it fell.

" Higher ! " cried the little one—" higher, Glycera, higher still ! " The child's enjoyment affected Glycera, who complied, singing at the same time :—

" A knight for the little one ?
No, no, no ! That is too little.
A prince ? Yes, my little one ?
No, no, no ! But a king ?
King isn't high enough.
What must our little one have ?—
An Emperor for husband ! "

Glycera became once more reconciled to her lot. The child, heated by the game of catch-ball played with herself for ball, and through hearing her nurse's ditty, romped all over the lawn, shouting again and again : " An Emperor for husband ! "

In the house, Marcia was busily engaged in adorning her mistress. The mistress did not want the curling-tongs to be used this time, for he loved her naturally wavy hair. But Marcia had to put many beautiful gold pins in her hair, which had been combed upwards to receive them. " There's another one, it looks particularly well in my hair," said the mistress. " Marcia, what did he say when he gave you the tablet ? " She glanced coquettishly at her hand-mirror. " May I speak, Mistress ? " " Say on ! " ordered her mistress.

" He said, in such a way that no one could overhear, that he only lived in the hope of this night." " A little more red on my cheek ! " interrupted the mistress quickly, looking at herself the whole time in a mirror with a painted ivory frame, which she held first to the right, then to the left. " I've written everything else down on the tablet." She grew excited in anticipation. " Do you know, Marcia," she said quickly, " the last time he was near me we were not near to one another at all ! Detestable ! My husband was there, you see. We'd been invited to a banquet. But even then we understood one another splendidly, although my husband was at my side, and he lay far away from me on a banqueting-couch. Marcia, he wrote in wine on the table what nobody but myself could understand, and I also read the words he made by signs with his fingers. Isn't that wonderful ? Nobody noticed anything, my husband least of all. My dress ! . . ." Marcia bent forward questioningly. " The linen one shot with silk, with the bright woven flowers, the foreign, the Asiatic one ! "

The servant brought the dress, helped her mistress to put it on, and sprayed it liberally with essence of nard. She helped her to put on the dainty emerald-green shoes encrusted with pearls, and then enveloped her in a lilac-coloured cloak, which her husband had had richly studded with precious stones. Marcia stood back admiringly before her mistress. And as the mistress saw her elegant reflection in the mirror, she said, " Why don't you ask me whom I'm going to see ? "

" *Domina !* " rejoined the servant, very humbly.

" But you must know ! Listen ! " babbled the mistress, " he's a singer, sings like a god—oh, he's a god himself . . . I should have worn the Coan dress, the openwork one, you know. But no ! He'll be impatient, and so shall I. Besides, I shall take it off . . ." In less than no time the mistress was on the Appian Way, and the horses galloped swiftly at her imperious bidding.

Were things ordered thus in the house of Messalina's parents, too ?

Messalina's mother, Domitia Lepida, the wife of Valerius Messala Barbatus, was related to the imperial house and belonged to the exalted class of Romans whose wealth and social standing permitted them every departure from the orderly married life of respectable citizens prescribed by the marriage laws. She was beautiful and of a passionate nature ; she embarked upon love affairs unscrupulously, and gave way to every impulse. A daughter of her age, she ignored every dictate of morality and duty and, like the others, let herself be led into adventures. In those days the wives of the highest officials were the mistresses of actors, comedians, singers and dancers. Here are two instances from a thousand. A lady of the famous old Lamia family made a sacrifice to the gods in order that her beloved Pollio, who sang to the zither, might take first prize at the games. She could not have done more if her husband had been taken ill, or her child given up by the doctor.

Eppia, a senator's wife, deserted her husband and children and fled with the gladiator Sergius to the Nile. She, who had never set foot aboard ship for fear of sea-sickness, sailed for days and nights, regardless of the evil-smelling hold and her qualms of dizziness and sea-sickness. She who as a child had lived in the lap of luxury, lain in a cradle inlaid with gold, grown up, as it were, in soft arm-chairs, breakfasted between two seamen ; and all for the sake of a gladiator, who incidentally had an ugly, disfigured face and watery eyes.

Everyone sought eagerly after variety and sensation. Everyone desired to live his life to the full, to pursue, even to the point of exhaustion, every possibility in life which offered excitement.

Rome was full of male and female adventurers, and anyone who wished to avoid sensual pleasure entirely would have had to leave Rome. The soul of the masses was troubled, and sucked everything into its whirlpool. Messalina as child and girl must certainly have heard a great deal in her home about love affairs of every variety. Even if it were the custom—to shield her from "corruption"—to keep the daughter at home until she was twelve or thirteen, and then marry her off with all dispatch, even then the Roman home of the imperial age afforded ample occasion to arouse the curiosity of a growing girl and make her hanker after the secrets and the arts of love. The mere fact of intercourse with the servants and nurses, who had been slaves and, as freedwomen, often stood on terms of intimacy with the members of the family and saw and heard much of them, was bound to contribute to a young girl's knowledge in the fascinating lore of love and to invite imitation.

Where every inexperienced and unspoilt girl from the provinces soon became a prostitute, a daughter of the city in which such a transformation took place was certainly exposed to the danger of moral contamination.

The temptations were innumerable. They all appeared in such a brilliant light and exhaled so much of the warmth of life that they easily found willing victims. The language of temptation is sweet, its visions draw the inexperienced senses onward and blind them to all else. In that adventurous, ravaged and ravaging age, which regarded fidelity as unnatural and obscenity as natural, abhorred simplicity and hailed excess as life ; in that age, when chastity only existed for pollution and life for destruction, men were beset by such new and surprising temptations that, their moral sense failing, they allowed themselves to be taken unawares, put their faith in the spirit which produced all these bewildering, magnificent occurrences, and let themselves be commanded by it, wherever it showed itself and regardless whence it came. The age no longer knew what was formerly known as morality.

A telling rebuff was administered by one Laronia—an old, rich, childless widow who used to spend days and nights in the garden of Venus—to a moralist who, in his indignation at the shamelessness of women, wildly invoked the strict marriage laws of ancient times. Slyly, coquettishly she looked at this model of all the virtues, gave him a cynical, yet complimentary smile, and addressed him as follows : " All praise to this our glorious, our blessed age ! How charming of it, to set up such a master of virtue as a judge over our morals ! Rome may now rest in peace. Yet—one question ! Isn't there a law about insults to Venus ? Go to the men and tell them so. Or don't you know that Venus doesn't like to see man going with man ? That she holds men who desire men in utter contempt ? You men are even greater sinners than we women. Unhappy Venus ! You protect yourselves by keeping your ranks closed. Yes, yes, 'twas ever thus. There is pity for ravens, but never for doves." The moral paragon, who was a pervert, fled.

A humorous episode of judge and accused, who were both judge and accused simultaneously.

In the capital of the empire men smiled and laughed at morals. They dismissed them with a gesture, left them to the little children, so long as they still believed in their household gods, and to the ignorant strangers who came to Rome from afar.

But daily association levelled all.

" See what association will do ! Strangers can only learn to love the capital after a lengthy stay. If they are boys, they have not to wait long for a playmate ; tiny trousers are sent, with little knives, reins and whip. And so, one day, they will take our bad habits home with them."

The company of male wooers of men was great ; for men had come to lose their virility. Even those whose noble descent should have been a guarantee of masculinity did not shrink, clad in diaphanous dress more suitable for hetaerae, in their lust after men from public abuse of the lights-of-love, and went to the length of assembling kindred spirits at a feast for men only, which was like a parody of the high State festival which used to be celebrated on the night of the first of May by the Vestal Virgins and married women in the house of the first State official. Cotytto herself, the goddess of debauchery, could not have equalled the display of passion at these male festivals. Painted like women, gay with ribbons, with glasses in the shape of enormous phalli filled with wine before them on the tables—thus did the weary, emaciated company keep revel by night in the flicker of the torches.

But women too had forgotten the ancient significance of the feast in honour of the good goddess, whose name no man might learn and who was the privy counsellor of women, of that feast for which they must prepare themselves by continence in love. In a subterranean temple of lust, the women met to abandon themselves to a frenzy of debauch. Maenads, drunk with desire and wine, raved and sprang about. They were just beginning to spray their naked bodies with wine, when the vault resounded with the cry : " Now's the time ! Bring in the men ! " " But my darling's not here. Then let any young man come in, no matter what he looks like. If not, then slaves for fun ! If they've gone, a water-carrier will do, and we'll pay him, the first comer from the street ! If he's not there either—oh, must it really be a man ? "

Who were they, who treated life so recklessly ?

Prostitutes, who at other hours roamed in hundreds through the streets, lay in wait for men in the colonnade of public gardens or, as an overture to the man-hunt, danced in the scantiest of attire to the accompaniment of tambourines and castanets before the circus and the theatres ? Were they Syrians, Egyptians, women for whom love provided an existence ?

They were matrons—women of social standing . . .

But all classes of society were caught in the swirling current of the spirit of the age. " Stop them ! Lock them up ! . . . But who is to watch the watchmen ? " Rome's consciousness of responsibility towards life was asleep. And so it came about that the forces from the undercurrent of life rose and flowed over the watchmen, who had become deaf and blind, and threw everything into a chaos in which the moralists, those capitalistic, bloated gluttons for philosophy, only made themselves audible as hired jesters indulging in irony at their own expense. Could there be any room left for the influence of " good education " in Rome, where everyone was obliged to breathe air pregnant with evil passions ? A walk through Rome, a single visit to the theatre would have been enough to overthrow the moral stability of any soul.

Did Messalina frequent the theatre as a girl ?—Probably, having regard to the prevailing custom. Parental authority at the beginning of the imperial era had almost entirely disappeared. The Roman girl felt herself free in the sense of being "unrestricted". What might Messalina see at the theatre? The early drama, which represented man's destiny in a tragic form and told of the struggle with the Fates, which dominated the wills of all men and gods, had long vanished. The theatre had lost its meaning. For the meaning of all things lies in man, who experiences them in himself. It seemed as though men had broken the spell of Fate; they were now bound by their own spell and could no longer free themselves from their impulses. In the theatre the elements of acting, dance, music, and song were no longer combined, as in a religious service; now each had to pay its separate tribute to sensuality. Men dismissed the gods with laughter. "The last Will and Testament of the late Jupiter" was the title of a burlesque. Others treated temple rites with flippant indecency, for where in Rome the spirits of men had once trembled in reverence when a god revealed himself in his sanctuary to their believing eyes, it was now an open secret that nothing remained of religious worship but the ceremonies, which were only a cloak for erotic excesses. Screened by corrupt priests, men and women met in the temples to indulge in every form of lust.

What had the theatres still to offer? They had been adapted to suit the uncultivated taste of the new rich and the State-fed proletariat. Costume and sword dances, naked dances, dances of the most lascivious description delighted the audiences. In the pantomime every possible story and jest was made the subject of a dance—raving Athamas, pregnant Ino, Zeus the seducer in his many masquerades. The dancer did it so admirably that "one might think that the stage was alive with other characters". His expressions and gestures were so finished that the spectators were made to experience the emotions and passions of the other characters, though these existed only in the actor's play of face and limb. But everything was presented in the light of sensuality. The "gentle Bathyllus", an actor whom the women worshipped for his beauty and the refinement of his art, had evening after evening to perform the dance of Leda and the swan. The house was sold out every time. For he danced this love scene with such abandonment, weaving in the very last tremor of passion, that the picture so vividly presented on the stage evoked in the women in the audience images which made them completely forget that they were in the theatre and not at home, or at least screened from the observation of the house.

The lubricity and the more or less veiled obscenities of the stage were in keeping with the taste of the audience. It would be idle to talk of their intelligence, for intelligence is a quality governed by conscious or unconscious selection. The spectators, who were highly impressionable, were fond of surprises, and these were liberally provided by the theatres with their bizarre and grotesquely-contrived farces and satires, the substance of which was adultery in all its variations, and in which shamelessness flourished openly or in disguise. In Rome nothing was held sacred any more. The few who still clung to the old faith in the gods, and to whom the traditions of their fathers still meant something, and those who, in the intoxicating atmosphere of Rome, had not lost their consciousness of a spiritual guiding force, spent their lives away from the streets and the multitude, and, in quiet resignation, deplored the pass to which things had come.

The Roman home had not much to offer its young daughters beyond what lay in the spirit of the age, which the mother herself had absorbed. "Can a mother be expected to imbue her daughter with morals better than her own ! Besides, the immoral mother even stands to profit by bringing up her daughter badly."

At a time when the entire fabric of tradition was shaken and men were clamouring for novelty, it was inevitable that the relation of man and woman in matrimony should also suffer a severe shock. Marriages were frequently concluded in order to enable the parties to live less strictly ; the attractions of adultery, too, though it was illegal, provided many with a new pleasure in life. In general, however, the antipathy to marriage was very marked. Both men and women wished to enjoy life in the utmost freedom from restraint.

Julius Caesar took the step of offering high rewards for large families, for this man of purely militarist ideas attached great importance to the increase of the population. However, he had not much success with this measure. The Emperor Augustus in 28 B.C. introduced a Bill containing severe penalties for unmarried persons but guaranteeing high rewards to those who married and brought children into the world. But the Bill met with no better reception than it had done eleven years before, when Augustus had recommended it for adoption. Eighteen years later, however, by consular authority, he caused the *Lex Julia* and the *Lex Papia Poppæa* to be introduced, whereby unmarried persons were not entitled to inherit except from the next of kin. Childless married couples had to remit the tenth part of every legacy to the Treasury. Furthermore the so-called three-child law was enacted, which offered special advantages ; the Roman resident with three children, the Italian with four and the provincial with five were given priority in official appointments, a seat of honour at the circus games, exempted from personal taxation and received a cash allowance out of public funds.

But men and women soon found out a way of circumventing the law. They resorted to the expedient of mock marriage ; men who had no property were paid by rich women, who did not want to give up their licentious mode of living, to marry them ; to be sure, such men were objects of ridicule even to their own wives, and scarcely had their share of bed and board. Other women bought themselves eunuchs. Thus nothing was changed in the great confusion and transgression. The lesser and the greater Bacchanalian parodies continued to flourish as luxuriantly as ever.

Augustus now intervened with every available legislative weapon to make war upon irregular sexual life, and he had considerable prospects of success. He demanded the application of the *Lex Julia de adulteris et stupris*, whereby :

" Whosoever shall defile a freeman against his will shall suffer death. Whosoever of his own free will shall submit to defilement or to any other immoral act shall be fined to the extent of one half of his property and shall not dispose by will of a greater part thereof. Women convicted of adultery shall be fined to the extent of one half of their dowry and a third part of their estate and banished to an island. Male adulterers shall also be banished to an island, but to another one, and one half of their estate confiscated." Women guilty of incest were exempt from punishment—the penalty for men being banishment to an island—unless their offence fell under the provisions of the *Lex Julia de adulteris et stupris.*

Augustus resorted to this law because he felt himself powerless against the excesses in Rome. Nor could he, having regard to his position in the State, have acted otherwise. For even the knights in Rome had literally besieged him with entreaty to desist from the application of the *Lex Julia* to the unmarried and the childless. Before issuing the new, stringent law, he therefore caused, in connexion with this very demand of the knights, the unmarried, the married and the fathers to be summoned to the great market-place, where he proposed to harangue them. There he found the number of the fathers and married men much smaller than that of the unmarried. He thereupon began, with every artifice known to the orator and actor, to invite support for his marriage law. He pulled out all the stops, as it were, in order to transform his words into living suggestive images. He affected the loving father, the philanthropist and the punitive, judging, avenging god ; intimated that non-observance of his law would be a personal affront, and treated his male hearers as children who had not outgrown the authority of the master's rod. Thus did he play the dual part of a man of principle and a purely militarist representative of the State.

He addressed himself to the married and unmarried groups separately, as follows :—

" . . . That first and greatest god, who fashioned us, divided the race of mortals in twain, making one half of it male and the other half female, and implanted in them love and compulsion to mutual intercourse, making their association fruitful, that by the young continually born he might in a way render even mortality eternal. Indeed, even of the gods themselves some are accounted male and some female ; and the tradition prevails that some have begotten others and some have been begotten of others. So even among those beings who need no such advice marriage and the begetting of children have been approved as a noble thing.

" You have done right, therefore, to imitate the gods and right to emulate your fathers . . . For is there anything better than a wife who is chaste, domestic, a good housekeeper, a rearer of children ; one to gladden you in health, to tend you in sickness ; to be your partner in good fortune, to console you in misfortune ; to restrain the mad passion of youth and to temper the unseasonable harshness of old age ?

" And is it not a delight to acknowledge a child who shows the endowments of both parents, to mature and educate it, at once the physical and spiritual image of yourself, so that in its growth another self lives again? Is it not blessed, on departing from life, to leave behind as successor and heir to your blood and substance one that is your own, sprung from your own loins . . .

"These, now, are the private advantages that accrue to those who marry and beget children; but for the State, for whose sake we ought to do many things that are even distasteful to us, how excellent and how necessary it is, if cities and peoples are to exist, and if you are to rule others and all the world is to obey you, that there should be a multitude of men, to till the earth in time of peace, to make voyages, practise arts, and follow handicrafts, and, in time of war, to protect what we already have with all the greater zeal because of family ties and to replace those that fall by others.

"Therefore, men—for you alone may properly be called men—and fathers—for you are as worthy to hold this title as I myself—I love you and praise you for this; and I not only bestow the prizes I have already offered but will distinguish you still further by other honours and offices, so that you may not only reap great benefits yourselves, but may also leave them to your children undiminished. I will now go over to the other group, whose actions will bear no comparison with yours and whose reward, therefore, will be directly the opposite. You will thus learn not alone from my words, but even more from my deeds, how far you excel them."

After this speech he made presents to some of them at once, and promised to make others; he then went over to the other crowd and spoke to them as follows:

"A strange experience has been mine, O—what shall I call you? Men? But you are not performing any of the offices of men. Citizens?

But for all that you are doing, the city is perishing. Romans? But you are undertaking to blot out this name altogether.

"I grieve to see that there are a great many of you. I could rather have wished that those others to whom I have just spoken were as numerous as you prove to be, and that preferably you were ranged with them, or otherwise, did not exist at all. For you . . . are bent upon annihilating our entire race and making it in truth mortal, are bent upon destroying and bringing to an end the entire Roman nation . . .

"For you are committing murder in not begetting in the first place those who ought to be your descendants; you are committing sacrilege in putting an end to the names and honours of your ancestors; and you are guilty of impiety in that you are abolishing your families, which were instituted by the gods . . .

"Moreover, you are destroying the State by disobeying its laws, and you are betraying your country by rendering her barren and childless; nay, more, you are laying her even with the dust by making her destitute of future inhabitants. For it is human beings that constitute a city, we are told, not houses or porticoes or market-places empty of men . . .

"You have trodden all the marriage laws underfoot, as if there were no State. How is the State to exist, if you do not marry and beget children? Do you desire to live apart from women always, even as the Vestal Virgins live apart from men? Then you should also be punished as they are if you are guilty of any lewdness. You talk, forsooth, about this 'free' and 'untrammelled' life that you have adopted, without wives and without children; but you are not a whit better than brigands or the most savage of beasts. For surely it is not your delight in a solitary existence that leads you to live without wives, nor is there one of you who either eats alone or sleeps alone;

no, what you want is to have full liberty for wantonness and licentiousness . . .

" Nay, I for my part am ashamed that I have been forced even to mention such a thing . . .

" How could I any longer be rightfully called father by you, if you rear no children ? Therefore, if you really hold me in affection, and particularly if you have given me this title not out of flattery but as an honour, be eager now to become both men and fathers, in order that you may not only share this title yourselves, but may also justify it as applied to me . . . "[1]

But Fate laughed at the Emperor's political sermon. At the time when Augustus delivered this oration, Marcus Papius Mutilus and Quintus Poppæus Secundus, after whom the law introduced as the *Lex Papia Poppæa* was named, were consuls. Neither of them had wife or child. Augustus was, moreover, by no means the kind of man whom such speeches became. In his youth he had been engaged to the daughter of a certain Publius Servilius Isauricus, but soon broke off the engagement and deserted his betrothed. The reason for this was a reconciliation with his political opponent Antonius, whose step-daughter Clodia he thereupon married, although the girl was yet a child. The motive for this marriage was political calculation. Scarcely had he married the child, however, when he became involved in a dispute with his mother-in-law Fulvia, as a result of which he sent his young wife away without having touched her, it was said.

Augustus then began to consider the expediency of a matrimonial alliance with Scribonia, a lady held in great esteem, who had been twice a widow and had children by one of her husbands. In the meantime, however, he made the acquaintance of Livia Drusa, the wife of Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero. Livia was sixteen years old—she was born in 57 B.C.—when she married her husband, a man three times her age.

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[1] Dion Cassius, *History of Rome*, Bk. 56, ch. 2–10 (Loeb Classical Library).

It is a strange romance which weaves itself through the life of this young wife. Shortly after her marriage, she had to fly, with her husband, from Octavianus Augustus, her later husband, who in consequence of the civil wars was her husband's political opponent. The pursuers drove the young wife, who kept her little child always with her, from Rome to Naples, through all Italy, to Sicily and Greece. Livia had to go through all kinds of adventures. "Once she was almost betrayed and delivered into the hands of her enemies by the crying of her little child"; she was hiding in a cave, the trackers were close at hand, and only chance saved her. On another occasion, in Greece, as spies were approaching, Livia and her husband fled by night into a wood. Suddenly she saw herself with her following encircled by a sea of flame. A way out seemed impossible, for the forest fire drew its circle closer and closer round the fugitives. Livia, whose dress and hair were already on fire, succeeded with great difficulty in escaping. She was eighteen years old before she ventured to return to Rome with her husband; Octavianus Augustus, their enemy, had won his battles and made peace with his political enemies.

In sensation-mongering Rome people were eager to hear about Livia's experiences. They all wanted to see the graceful, beautiful young wife who had been through so many harassing adventures. Above all, however, it was Augustus himself who burned to learn Livia's romance from her own lips. He heard, and in the hearing there welled up in him the desire to continue the romance. He left the wife of his former adversary, Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero, no peace. He was infatuated with her charms, and, disregarding her husband, saw as much as he possibly could of the delightful " Drusilla ", as he was fond of calling Livia Drusa in tender moments. Society in Rome was at first not particularly astonished ; the affair was amusing only because the hero of the romance was the Emperor. Scribonia, however, Augustus' legitimate wife, lost her temper, and raged at Augustus about his " mistress ". This merely increased Augustus' passion for " his Drusilla ". Suddenly resolved, Augustus wrote to his wife a notice of divorce, went to Livia's husband and demanded of him that he, too, should divorce his wife. There was no need of persuasive eloquence ; the husband assented.

Livia was not particularly distressed by the change of husbands. Her new one was only 24 years old, and looked up to by all Rome. Her long-felt wish, derived from her inheritance of Claudian pride and ambition, to assert her individuality at the side of the conqueror in the civil wars and Emperor of Rome, was fulfilled. Fortune's caprice ! Livia, harried, pursued, hunted by the sword of her enemy from land to land, hard pressed on all sides, found safety in an adventurous and novel way—by running straight into the arms of her pursuer and adversary, to receive the kiss of love from him ! Life is sometimes like a poem ! Augustus defended his action to the public by announcing that " he had been unable to bear Scribonia any longer on account of the perversity of her character ".

Rome was now the richer by a morsel of gossip which, with little encouragement, might have attained the dimensions of a full-grown scandal. For Livia " Drusilla " was in her sixth month of pregnancy at the time of her marriage to Augustus. In such circumstances it was contrary to law to contract a new marriage. There were rumours and mutterings of doubt as to the paternity of the expected offspring of the imperial house.

A merry little episode caused the greatest amusement at the wedding feast; a little page from Livia's former household, who was a cup-bearer and had more than once delighted the ladies at dinner parties with his naïve questions and answers, saw to his surprise as he entered the banqueting-hall his mistress at table next to Augustus. "What are you doing here, my lady?" inquired the little page, looking at Livia with great, wondering eyes: "Your husband is over there!" And he pointed at Livia's first husband, who was present at the wedding feast.

In the streets of Rome they sang, three months after Livia's marriage to Augustus:

"With a bit of luck you may
Get a three-months' child."

Few Romans could hold the marriage laws or the duties of married life sacred when the head of the State gave such an example of easy morals. The same Augustus compelled one of his favourite freedmen, Proculus, whom he had called his friend, to commit suicide when his adulterous relations with Roman ladies became public, though he himself seduced the wife of his best friend Mæcenas and was the lover of several other married women. On one occasion, in her husband's presence, Augustus led the wife of a man of consular rank out of the banqueting-hall into a bedroom, and after an interval brought her back to table "with scarlet ears and tousled hair". The Augustan marriage laws had gone lame. But the imperial exhortations against licentiousness were also fated to go astray. It was well known that Augustus "used his friends as procurers; on his behalf they had to go in the guise of purchasers to the slave-dealer Thoranius and ask to be shown married women and maidens in a state of nudity".

Antony, who was afterwards the adversary of Augustus in the civil war, once wrote to him, before they became open enemies, to inquire in confidence "what has turned you against me? Is it because I sleep with the Queen,[1] perhaps? She is my wife. It isn't as though this had only just begun; it has been going on for nine years. And you yourself, are you sleeping only with Drusilla? I will stake your life on it, that when you read this letter you will already have possessed Tertulla or Terentilla, Rufilla or Salvia Titiscennia or all of these." Sensation-mongering Rome was by no means unaware of its Emperor's sensuality. "He was enmeshed," said his biographer, who endeavoured to defend his erotic passions but did not succeed in transforming his voluptuary into a man of morals, "in the toils of erotic passion all his life, and in later years was a friend of young girls, whom he managed to procure from all sides, even through the agency of his own wife."

In Rome men spoke of a secret company, which they called the Table of the Twelve Gods: "the members of the company were said to recline at table in the guise of the gods and goddesses, with Augustus himself taking the part of Apollo."

Antony wrote a letter to Augustus reproaching him with this, and enumerating the names of the six gods and six goddesses of the company; and a satirical ballad, "The Company of the Pretty Fellows," was made and sung on every hand. The spirit of an age does not stand still even before an imperial palace, especially when it has been created in part by the occupants of the palace itself. Others, however, should not be too severely blamed if, caught in the swirling current, they cannot find the means to save themselves.

Why was the poet Ovid obliged to leave the capital and spend the rest of his days at Tomi on the Black Sea, far from his native land and his dearly-loved Rome? Was it because he had helped by his erotic songs to encourage the profligate spirit of the age in its wild hunt for pleasure? When as a young man he had sung the praises of Corinna, the child of his own imagination, Ovid was left in peace; when, however, his hair began to turn grey, Augustus banished him. On account of his songs?—A pretext.

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[1] Cleopatra of Egypt.

"Why did I see it?" laments Ovid in his Tomi verses. "Why did my eyes offend? My only regret, that I unintentionally witnessed a crime. My offence is, that I had eyes. It is only in error that the most part of my offence lies."

Augustus did not wish to have in Rome a man who had witnessed love-passages in the palace.

"I am like Actæon, who saw Diana naked," laments the poet, "and who was therefore torn to pieces by the hounds the goddess laid on his track."

Livia was too shrewd to expose her imperial consort publicly on account of his erotic misdemeanours; on the contrary, as an ambitious woman who took a keen interest in politics, she strove to deify him, with the object of founding a Julian-Claudian dynasty with right of succession. She had to make sure of her husband's constant friendship, and therefore she ignored all his adulterous lapses.

But Julia, Augustus' daughter by marriage with Scribonia, put immense difficulties in the path of her ambitious stepmother, through her way of living. Marriage laws, laws against unchastity and debauchery—the Emperor's daughter violated them all. The imperial palace on the Palatine was the focus of the age. All the fashions and tendencies of the time were concentrated upon it, and were reflected back. Following his official orations to the citizens of Rome on morals, which, however, he hardly supported by his own mode of life—quite the contrary, in fact—Augustus demanded the strictest chastity of his daughter Julia, holding himself up to her as paternal tutor and protagonist of morality; required of the girl that she should occupy her time as the girls of Rome had done hundreds of years before in the good old days. Spinning and weaving garments for her father were to provide Julia with spiritual solace. He strictly forbade his daughter all contact with the outside world. When on one occasion a young patrician of irreproachable habits—Lucius Vinicius—intimated that he wished to pay his respects to her, Augustus wrote him an offensive letter accusing him or lack of education and decent manners.

The Emperor's daughter, who was highly intelligent and of an emotional temperament, by no means saw eye to eye with her father. Before Augustus was aware of it, his daughter's true character had burst through the mask which he had forced her to wear. The only effect of the pressure brought to bear upon her was to strengthen her will and drive her to extremes. Julia, daughter of the Emperor Augustus, became the prototype of the revolting decadence of the age.

But neither this nor the spirit of the age alone was responsible for turning Julia into the vicious society wanton which she became. It was Augustus' and Livia's misdirected scheming for power and glory at her expense which produced this caricature of a life, this harlotry hidden behind State intrigue. To her father, the daughter represented a counter in the political game ; Julia was therefore to shine resplendent in the light of a moral upbringing.

The girl was not yet three years of age when Augustus had her engaged (36 B.C.) to the nine-year-old Antonius Anthyllus, the son of Marcus Antonius, because he was on terms of friendship with the father of the bridegroom-elect. When he broke with Antony and their contest for world supremacy began he cancelled this engagement, and arranged for his child to be engaged to a son of the Dacian king Cotys ; for Augustus did not yet feel strong enough to cope with his adversary Mark Antony, who had made a political and personal alliance with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. His daughter accordingly, in order to provide him with an ally against his political rival, had to submit to the prospect of marrying the King of the Getæ, a great and warlike people of eastern Europe, whose country possessed mines of gold, silver, and iron. Indeed, Augustus was himself on the point of giving up "his Drusilla" in order to marry a daughter of this powerful monarch and thereby safeguard the interests of his own throne. The projected engagement to the son of a "barbarian" king was very soon abandoned, however, since Fortune sent Augustus help from another quarter, and his adversary Mark Antony was overthrown. A passionate dicer, Augustus gambled with men as if they were indeed little cubes of bone. The autocrat can indulge his whim ; if the throw wins, he lets it stand ; it it does not, he takes it back.

Julia, who had now attained the age of 14, was married to Marcellus, who was still half a boy. He was the son of Augustus' sister Octavia. Thereby, thought the cunning Augustus, power would be kept in the family. The boy, however, died nine months later. Then Augustus thought of a new plan. The statesman Agrippa, the man of inflexible devotion to duty, was chosen as a husband for Julia. The fact that he was already married, and, to make matters worse, to Marcella, Marcellus' sister, and that Augustus had but a short time before ordered him to take her to wife, did not disturb the Emperor. Agrippa received an imperial order to divorce Marcella, although he had several children by her. Augustus now gave his niece Marcella to Antonius, the son of Mark Antony, in marriage, and Agrippa received in exchange Julia, daughter of Augustus and of his cast-off wife Scribonia.

This arrangement, however, by no means suited the Empress Livia, Augustus' wife. She desired to see her son Tiberius—her son by her first marriage, the little child whom she had always kept with her in her flight from Augustus—seated one day on the imperial throne ; and as, to her sorrow, she had no son by Augustus—Drusus the " three-months' child " of yore having died on reaching the age of manhood—Tiberius, according to Livia's plan, should have married Julia, and thereby become Augustus' successor.

After a married life of ten years Agrippa died at the age of 52. His widow, Julia, was just 27. The Imperial couple and Julia herself now began what can only be described as an organized drive for the heart of Tiberius. Tiberius was happily married to Vipsania, Agrippa's daughter by his first marriage. Livia's son wished for nothing but to be allowed to remain at the side of his wife. He had no desire to be Emperor. He loathed the base toadies who infested the brilliant, prodigal imperial court, and was an enemy of the prevailing sensuality in Rome. Julia had more than once made Tiberius an offer of marriage, and Tiberius had scorned her. In spite of this, she now became the wife of Tiberius by imperial decree.

Julia triumphed, since Tiberius was obliged to take her to wife whether he liked it or not. But Tiberius obeyed the imperial order with a rebellious heart. Overcome with grief, he sent his beloved Vipsania the notice of divorce, and to his last hour he never forgot the wife he loved so well. Years after his compulsory marriage to Julia, at a chance meeting with his former wife, he was so overcome by the memory of the happy days spent with her—the only time he had ever known happiness—that he burst into a passion of weeping. Looking into his heart and surveying his life, he thought his fate little better than that of a martyr.

The imperial couple now decided that the best thing to do was to arrange for Vipsania's removal out of Tiberius' sight, as if human affection and memory were affected by distance !

Augustus had none of what men call " heart " in human relationships. He was a selfish calculator, to whom the souls of men were no more than ciphers. How could any woman retain a vestige of respect for the state of matrimony in such an atmosphere, where human beings were bartered, and marriages light-heartedly dissolved and arranged ! Julia ought perhaps to have had such a respect for her husband Agrippa, a man of iron diligence who only lived for the interests of the State, and was victor of many battles, that the very thought of him should have made her forget her passion for life and her thirst for love. But women attach other values to life than men. If a man uses a woman for his personal ends without regard for her female outlook on life he must not wonder if she goes her own way and deceives him. It must be added that Julia made no attempt to live up to the paternal and at the same time imperial marriage laws.

While she was Agrippa's wife, Julia was a great deal alone. They only spent the first year of their married life in Rome, and even there Julia saw very little of her husband, for he was continuously called away from her side by his official duties. Then he had to go soldiering in Gaul, Germany, and Spain for two years. Later, after a two years' stay in Rome, the Orient called him away for three years. Julia accompanied him for part of one journey. It was when he was setting out for Judæa to visit King Herod. This time Agrippa spent four years and a half abroad. He was scarcely back at home before duty called him away again to a province. On the return journey, overburdened with responsibilities and over-worked, he was taken ill and died.

In what relation did Julia stand to Agrippa, the man who through the Battle of Actium brought peace to Rome and the world and thereby welded the Roman Empire into a whole? Agrippa's ruling thought was duty to the State. But a woman cannot occupy herself entirely with such things if she does not want her natural instincts to be stifled.

Julia avoided everything in the nature of restraint in the most determined fashion. Her friends were mostly young aristocrats, who derived lively pleasure from the company of a lady no less entertaining, literary and artistic, than ready for amatory escapades. She always had an enthusiastic circle of young men around her who had known all about the fashionable poet Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* before they read the book. They jested, made friends quickly, took nothing seriously, made love in terms of hours, nights. On one occasion Julia was alone with a few intimate friends. One of them asked the wife of the sombre Agrippa how it happened "that all her children resembled Agrippa when she was known to be so catholic in the bestowal of her favours". Julia laughed, roguishly and knowingly: "I never take on passengers until the cargo's safely aboard."

The calculation displayed in this daringly cynical reply was assured by a paternal inheritance.

Augustus often recognized himself in his daughter. That is why he loved her. He was as indulgent towards his Julia as if it had been himself. He delighted in her ready wit, loved her unaffected merriment, and was happy when she was near him. His daughter knew this perfectly well, and was therefore able to blindfold her father to her superlatively licentious mode of life. One day Julia was at the circus, looking on at the gladiatorial games, in the midst of a circle of rich young men of fashion. Her father, who occupied a seat some distance away, sent her a note in which he drew her attention to the difference between her and his wife Livia, who had arrived "accompanied by none but elderly, worthy men ". Julia sent back the following reply to her father : " Mine too will some day grow old with me."

" Augustus frequently urged her to observe a little more moderation in the matter of her all too sumptuous and immodest toilets." In allusion to this characteristic of the age Ovid makes Paris say to Helen : " Through thy open dress—I call to mind—thy breasts peeped forth, and, to see them unveiled, my eye found the way." Once, when Julia appeared in a transparent dress, Augustus gazed at her in silence. On the following day she came " in entirely different garb, and, with an air befitting it, greeted her father with the decorum of a noble matron." Her father, who to be sure had mastered his disapproval of the day before, now could not contain his delight : " How much more commendable is the dress of Augustus' daughter to-day than it was yesterday ! " " Which means," retorted the ever-ready Julia, " that to-day I got myself up for my father's eyes, yesterday for those of my husband."

" The refined taste, the studied grace of the external forms of social intercourse were only a veneer, under which the most appalling immorality and lack of principle were concealed, ready to break out at the first favourable opportunity." Augustus was unperturbed. He had to admit that women's hearts were not stones. He must have known as much from his own love affairs. Even the wife of a Julius Cæsar, descended from a most distinguished family, allowed herself to be misled. Augustus may have smiled to himself as he recalled how the seducer, Publius Clodius, disguised as a woman harpist, had once stolen into Cæsar's house and made a cuckold of the great man.

But Augustus himself was a humbug in his public speeches and in overlooking all the failings of the nobility so long as they observed good form as taught by Ovid, a promoter of " immorality ". He attached no importance personally to morality. He only wanted to feel its radiance around him and bathe in it.

Did he know of his daughter's ways and irregularities? It is certain that the father saw in his daughter much that he did not like. To his intimate friends Augustus sometimes said " that he had two daughters, to handle whom was a delicate matter and to bear with a necessity :—the Republic and his Julia ". Yet whenever he ventured upon a reproach, no matter how gently, Julia disarmed him every time so pleasantly and wittily that Augustus could only regard his daughter's frivolity as a delightful peculiarity. On such occasions he would say to his friends : " The Claudian matron of whom history tells must have been like that ! "

He meant that proud Claudia Quinta, who once, at the time of the second Punic war, when they fetched the image of the Mother God from Pessinus, publicly gave her calumniators such triumphant proof of her chastity. The vessel conveying the holy image had stuck fast in a shallow near Ostia. The soothsayers announced that only a chaste woman could move it. Claudia, who had been accused of incontinency, stepped forward from among the company of the matrons of Rome who had come to receive the image, and after calling upon the holy mother Cybele to help her to vindicate her innocence, took hold of the rope, and behold ! the heavy vessel followed the frail hand of a woman, and, amid the jubilation of the people, swept up the Tiber to the city. Claudia's fame was handed down to posterity by a statue raised to her memory. At all events, Augustus was greatly biased in his daughter's favour.

Dion Cassius, who wrote the *History of Rome*, said : " Princes hear of everything except what goes on in their own house ; and while nothing which they themselves do passes unnoticed by their courtiers, naught of it comes to their own knowledge."

Tiberius, Julia's husband, could no longer bear his wife's utterly incontinent life of dissipation. He left Rome for some years. And one day came the collapse of the glittering edifice of folly and licentiousness in which Julia's life had been spent. The blind race for the favour of the moment hides the danger of a fall, but unforeseen, suddenly, the chasm yawns at the runner's feet. Julia, now a woman of 38 years, was arraigned. Augustus, in the bitterness of his savage disappointment and in the hope of yet saving his dynasty, demanded a public trial of the monstrous scandal, which was already known to all the world. Overcome with shame at the disgrace which had befallen his house, he shut his doors against everybody. "Would that I had been Phœbe's father!" he exclaimed on hearing that Phœbe, his daughter's friend and partner in all her love affairs, had hung herself.

What had happened? Velleius Paterculus delivers himself in his *History of Rome* as follows :—

"The divine Augustus' daughter Julia, entirely unmindful of her great father and of her great husband, omitted from her life of debauchery no shameful thing that a woman can either do or experience. The intensity of her gratification was measured only by the degree of licence a particular sin afforded her. Whatever pleased her was to her permissible."

The indictment contained many counts: "This degenerate woman is alleged to have counted her adulterous paramours by the dozen; to have passed through the streets by night accompanied by swarms of her boon companions and made the Forum itself and the rostra from which her father proclaimed his law against adultery the scene of her turpitude; to have made daily assignations with her paramours in the disreputable neighbourhood of the Marsyas statue, which stands in the Forum as an ancient symbol of the freedom of the city; indeed, to have sunk to such base depths as to offer herself, like the common prostitutes whose place of assembly it is, for hire to casual wooers."

Yet this was in no way different from what many patrician women of Rome themselves did, in the theatres, halls, temples, crypts, market-places. It was an age of troubled waters ; the vortex drew everything down into its swirling depths. A considerable number of women of the aristocracy and of men were involved in the great trial, so that Augustus himself laid down that the preliminary investigation was " not to go back for more than a definite number of years." What was his motive for this ? " Abscess " and " cancerous ulcer " was what the stricken parent called his daughter. " Would that I had remained single, and died alone and childless ! "—quoted Augustus, applying in his histrionic manner this line of Homer to himself.

Another calamity befell Augustus. Among the lovers upon whom Julia had bestowed her special favour was one Julius Antonius, a son of Mark Antony, Augustus' adversary. It caused Augustus bitter pain to find in this very young man whom, after vanquishing his father, he had not only pardoned but distinguished by appointment to well-paid posts of honour and admitted into his family by giving him his sister's daughter in marriage, the dishonour of his house and, what was worse, a traitor to his own imperial person.

About this period Augustus was three times in danger of assassination. Once it was Marcus Lepidus who hatched a plot, but was thwarted by Augustus, who outdid the young man in promptness of action, and had him put to death. The second time it was Licinius Murena with Fannius Caepio, who however also had to atone with their lives for the conspiracy which their discontent with the conditions under Augustus had led them to form. The third time it was

Egnatius Rufus, a man " more like a gladiator than a senator "—he was a senator—whom the people, whose side he always gladly took, esteemed very highly. Egnatius had many supporters in his conspiracy, which however came to the ears of Augustus and ended in Egnatius' being beheaded in a dungeon. Certain plebeians, too, dissatisfied with Augustus' dominion, made no secret of their intentions. Such were Junius Novatus, who wrote an open letter to Augustus, and Cassius Patavinus, who exclaimed at a crowded feast : " I have the desire and the courage to murder Augustus ! " And now Julus Antonius had added himself to the number. Julus Antonius made common cause with Julia to do away with Augustus and usurp the imperial throne. But Augustus himself was chiefly to blame for these events in the imperial house. His imperial rule was a life-long falsehood, and was based, very insecurely, upon hypocrisy.

Julia's fall was only a prelude to the decline of Roman despotism. What Julia did in virtue of her illustrious descent happened throughout Rome in every shape and form. As a nobly born daughter of her time, whose power afforded her the utmost freedom from restraint, she acted as a woman no differently to the men, whose methods differed merely by reason of the man's character which nature had given them. Julia paid the penalty of her recklessness. Her father banished her to a desolate rock-girt island, there to spend five years deprived of every comfort, isolated from her friends. Only her mother Scribonia shared her exile, though many of the companions of her all too merry hours tried to secure her liberation. Augustus subsequently consigned his daughter to the military prison at Rhegium, at the southernmost extremity of Italy, where she had nothing to do but wait for death.

However, the people of Rome felt a certain amount of compassion for the light-hearted Julia they knew so well, and besieged Augustus with entreaties to let her return. But her father was inexorable. In open assembly he uttered the "terrible words": "Would that you had only such daughters and wives!" Julia's erotic pastimes were at an end. Under the protection of the spirit of the age she had let herself go too far. Had Julia had her father's imperial power, she could, as he did, have stayed in Rome; could, indeed, if she had chosen, have made the imperial palace the scene of her own erotic orgies and those of others, as did a few years later one of her father's successors to the throne, the Emperor Caligula, who installed a brothel in the palace in rooms selected by him for the purpose, "splendidly furnished in keeping with the dignity of the place, where patrician matrons and free-born boys were to hire themselves for sexual commerce."

Augustus!—His tongue, which had spoken to the people so fluently and eloquently of the beauty of virtue and duty, was for ever still. Several decades later his great-grandson the Emperor Caligula dispatched his living directories—slaves, who knew every Roman citizen's face and social position—to the great market-place, the Forum, the streets, the basilicas, "to invite young men and old to debauch." Money was a secondary consideration. Caligula had, to be sure, set up a brothel in the palace to make money, but he was magnanimous: if a man had no ready money when the imperial slave invited him to the bawdy-house, Caligula lent it him, albeit at a high rate of interest, and honoured all such compulsory votaries of a life of debauch by promulgating their names as the "names of those who came to the aid of their Emperor's revenue". Not until his death did Augustus' mask fall from his face,—a face which revealed itself in Caligula and his successors.

Caligula levied "from the earnings of every public prostitute the price of one cohabitation." He provided an additional article to this law to the effect that quondam courtesans and procuresses were also liable, and that marriages also should fall within the scope of the law. The line of demarcation between prostitute and married woman, between veto and commandment, which Augustus had drawn—albeit only with dialectical, meaningless words—was thus obliterated. Whoever slept with a woman, whether she was his wife or not, had to pay tax to the State, or rather to the Emperor.

The spirit of the age was at high tension. Temperaments glowed and had too little fuel to consume ; things were changed from the time when wars and the long drawn-out revolution had kept high and strong the spiritual fire of men. Upon what was this surfeit of vital force to expend itself ? An upheaval had come to pass, such as had never been known on earth. Everything was there upon which life could dissipate its energies. Slavishly, Rome's senses accepted what the world had to offer. And as ever, when men are under the influence of nervous excitement and contrasts abound, life and death in Rome were very close to one another. Life, at its summit, prepares itself for a leap into the abyss.

The most strongly contrasted characteristics met in Rome. Cowardice and courage, depotism and servility, authority and subordination were intensified to such a degree that their symptoms resembled madness. Rome lived, as it were, in a state of insanity. One day gave a man golden prospects of happiness ; the next threw him ruthlessly down. And always there was danger, demanding all life's powers of resistance, and at the same time foretelling the certainty of annihilation. And so the " degenerates " became heroes in a moment. Julus Antonius, who without consideration for his wife, relatives, and benefactors, indulged his degenerate nature in the wildest orgies with the daughter of the man whose life he sought to take in order to step into his shoes ; who spent his nights with Julia in close embrace, tossed her into the arms of others and retrieved her again ; who let her lead him into unheard-of erotic excesses and used her for the same purpose ; Julus Antonius, who had lived life to the utmost wherever danger threatened him, and was insatiable in his lust after pleasure—this Julus Antonius, who had been branded with infamy on account of these things, stood suddenly, heroically, as a man of honour before the eyes of Rome, because he made himself " the avenger of his own crime ". He died by his own hand. The scales of life were weighted on the side of catastrophe. One chief cause of this was undoubtedly the terrible events which happened in the imperial family, especially during the period of the Julian–Claudian dynasty.

There was an interminable number of death sentences to be executed. It was sufficient that a man was rich. Hired informers, who formed a class by themselves, were immediately forthcoming, together with eloquent counsel for the Emperor, to prove a false charge through false witnesses and obtain sentence of death on the accused. If among the many sycophants there happened to be a man who dared to show the least opposition to injustice and oppression, he was certain to suffer death, like Scribonianus and Paetus.

" The legate Scribonianus formed a conspiracy in Illyria against the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 42). Paetus took part in it. Scribonianus was put to death and Paetus brought to Rome as a prisoner. Arria, Paetus' wife, begged in vain to be allowed to take ship with her husband. She wanted to take the place of the slave, of whom they could not well deprive a man of his rank. When this was refused, she hired a small boat, in which she followed the ship." In Rome she said to the wife of Scribonianus, who had been put to death by the Emperor : " Do you expect me to listen to you, who live, after Scribonianus has been killed in your lap ? " Arria urged her husband to put an end to his life. When he hesitated to do so, Arria drove the dagger into her own breast, then handed the weapon to her husband with the words " It does not hurt, Paetus ". Arria the Younger too, the daughter of Arria, wanted to die with her husband Thrasea Paetus, who had been sentenced to death. It was only by entreating her to live for the sake of her daughter Fannia that they succeeded in inducing her to change her mind.

Even in these heroic incidents the spirit of the age played a part. It set the clock of life fast or slow, with catastrophic effects. A touch, and a man blazed up in the fiercest love of life ; another, and life became worthless to him. Many a woman of that time died with her husband when he was condemned to death ; many shared the fate of banishment with him, like Fannia, the daughter of Arria the Younger, who twice accompanied her husband into exile. The historian Velleius Paterculas remarks in his account of that deplorable period of civil war through which Rome had recently passed " The loyalty of the exiles' wives was irreproachable, that of the freedmen rather less, the slaves had it to a certain degree only, while in the sons it was entirely lacking. Their common necessity gave strength to the women's loyalty, while the sons through fear for their own lives became disloyal." Yet the faithfulness of woman to man is based upon other assumptions than man's faithfulness to man. Woman's character is assuredly more capable of devotion than man's. Others died for their sick husbands, sacrificing themselves in the belief that one life would be saved if another was destroyed in its stead.

The following story is "told by the inscription on a tombstone hewn out of the rock at Cagliari": " A certain Cassius Philippus was banished to Sardinia, whither his wife Atilia Pomptilla accompanied him. The husband was taken ill, perhaps on account of the unhealthy climate. She dedicated herself to death for his sake and died in very truth (after one and twenty years of married life) while he remained alive." "A Greek epitaph mentions a new Alcestis, called Kallikrateia, who died for her excellent husband Zeno, the only one whom she had ever clasped to her bosom, whom her heart treasured more highly than the sunlight and her sweet children." Pliny the Younger writes in his *Epistolae* of a "Series of noble and excellent women". He tells of the heroic death of a woman of his native town of Como. "During a trip on the Lake of Como, an old friend showed him the villa with an upper room built out over the water from which this woman and her husband had hurled themselves. The husband had been suffering from spreading ulcers, the result of a long illness. He showed them to his wife, and asked her if she thought that the evil could be cured. It seemed to her to be hopeless. She exhorted him to seek release in death, and in so doing was not only his mate, but his guide and example. They tied themselves together and sprang thus into the lake."

Out of the sensual rout of the age there emerged certain characters, notably among the women, which seemed to be of another world. And yet the age did for them what it did to those who apparently differed utterly from them. It is the intensified sense of life—though in a moment it can revert to the other extreme—which obliterates differences in externals and imparts to the "morally" low and to the high-minded alike the essential character of the age. The women of Rome, like the men, were possessed by the spirit of the age. They had the same unspoken conception of life, which determined all their actions and reactions. They did not by any means forget that duties existed and that actions could be accounted good or bad ; but they did not grasp the lesson at the time. The impact of new impressions on their minds was too violent, and required corresponding reactions. To be sure only rich women of high social standing could afford the luxury of debauch,—or poor women of the lower orders, who reckoned to gain by abandoning the old customs. We have information as to the kind of life which was expected of a woman—and the kind which certainly existed in many cases—from epitaphs on the graves of women of the middle and lower classes.

A panegyric of a departed Murdia is worded thus : " Since praise of all good women is generally couched in the same terms, because the virtues bestowed upon them by nature and maintained by their own care need no eulogies, and it is sufficient to say that all women of good name have proved their worth ; and because it is difficult for a woman to acquire fresh fame, as her life is not subject to so many vicissitudes, so must they of necessity strive for what is common to them all, lest the breach of any one of the just commandments should mar all else. The greater glory, therefore, has my dearest mother gained, in that she in modesty, integrity, chastity, obedience, diligence in domestic duties, conscientiousness and fidelity resembled and equalled all other good women and stood second to none."

The husband of a certain Turia said of her : " The domestic virtues of chastity, humility, kindliness, submissiveness, diligence in both kinds of wool-work, religion without superstition, avoidance of anything conspicuous and exaggerated in personal adornment and dress—why should I mention all these things ? Why speak of your love for your dear ones, your devotion to your relations, since you honoured my mother as you did your own parents and cared for her no less than for your own kith and kin, and had, all in all, innumerable qualities in common with all women who set store by woman's honour ?" To be sure there were among these citizens' wives women whose husbands did not mourn them, as the following epitaph shows : "On the day of her death I gave thanks to gods and men."

Another epitaph reads : "To my dearest wife, with whom I lived for eighteen years without cause for complaint ; out of my longing for her I have sworn never to take another woman to wife." The epitaph of one Alia Potestas is "First to rise from her couch, last to retire to rest, after having ordered everything in the house, never did she, without urgent reason, lay her wool-work aside". Another : "Here lies Amymone, wife of Marcius ; she was good and fair ; a diligent spinner, hospitable and housewifely, modest, chaste, and devout."

What the fruits of a good education were expected to be in a girl is shown by an epitaph : "Although not quite thirteen years old, she had the wisdom of age with the dignity of a woman, yet girlish grace combined with virgin modesty. How she would cling to her father's neck ! How affectionately and yet bashfully she embraced us, her fatherly friends ! How she loved her nurses, masters and instructors, each and all according to their office ! How diligently and intelligently she pursued her studies ! How rarely and sensibly she played ! With what composure and patience she bore her last illness ! She died betrothed, not quite thirteen years old." Such excessive praise of a girl as a model of her kind would seem, however, to have had its source rather in parental grief for the loss of a beloved daughter. It is certain that many people in Rome longed for the olden time, when strict decency and morality prevailed, when diligence and industry, order and restraint, contributed to form character. It is certain, too, that some inclination for the old Roman virtues and simple habits was yet to be found in Rome, aroused by the appalling extravagances of the time. More and more, however, the age was sweeping away the liking and the hope for such things.

The poet Albius Tibullus, a contemporary of the poet Ovid, sings of a little girl—Plania—whom he calls Delia ; tells how she with her mother and the maids went about their tasks in their simple home. He tended her in sickness and yearned for her recovery, hoping for a reward in perpetual happiness with the beloved. He exults " in the way Delia gave herself to him completely " and is so sure that he is the sole object of the girl's desire that he imagines a pretty scene. Delia, at home with her mother, is at the loom ; tired out by her labours, she falls asleep ; at that moment he enters, suddenly, like a god from heaven. Moved by this fancy, he went to see her in reality—and found that she had taken another for husband. But he persevered, hoping to carry her off, for Delia had already encouraged him in that hope. He came again. This time he found himself in the presence of a third ; Delia had looked out a rich lover for herself. Still the poet did not despair. He saw his Delia and recalled old memories to her in the fond hope of thereby winning her back, but in vain.

He could still take revenge, however ; and he tried to disturb his rival's happiness with the taunt that he too would soon be deceived. Of his dream, " a peaceful country life in the seclusion of true love," there remained only a fading memory. " . . . But Venus chiefly must I outrage. 'Tis she that prompts the evil deed "—cries the poet who has lost his ideal—" 'tis she that gives me a grasping mistress . . . so let her feel my sacrilegious hands . . ." [1] With these words the poet turns to Nemesis, the maiden whom now he woos—to Nemesis, Revenge !

Delia and the poet—Rome and her ideal ! There is a real resemblance between Tibullus' romantic poem and the story of Rome. So long as Rome had held to her ideal of virtue she grew, increased in strength and greatness. So soon as she renounced her ideal, her greatness toppled over and her strength was dissipated in sensuality.

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[1] Tibullus, *Elegies*, bk. ii, elegy iv (Loeb Classical Library).

"But," the poet forewarns the rich man with whom she has cast in her lot, "hark to my revenge. Thou also wilt some day be deceived . . . Thou hast cast me and my ideal into chains. Farewell, freedom!" It is like ancient Rome bidding herself farewell before she embarked on a new life. "Ah!" runs the poet's prophetic curse, "ah, ruin to all who gather the emeralds green, or with Tyrian purple dye the snowy sheepskin. The stuffs of Cos and the bright pearl from out of the red seas sow greed in lasses. 'Tis these have made them evil. From these hath the door learned to feel the key, and the dog been set to guard the threshold. But if thou comest with a great fee keys are no hindrance and the very dog is mute . . ."[1] But who can escape from Eros, no matter in what shape he comes! The poet continues, "Ah, this desire in evil wrapt! . . . My warnings are true; but what does truth avail me? I must love her upon her own conditions. Even if she bid me sell my ancestral domain . . ."[2] "If she smiles upon me and promises me flaming passion . . . how shall I resist? . . . she holds again my heart in the hollow of her hand . . .

"All that thou beholdest, stranger, where mighty Rome lies spread, was grass and hill before the coming of Phrygian Æneas; and where stands the Palatine sacred to Phœbus of the Ships, there once lay the herd of Evander's exiled kine. From gods of clay sprang yonder golden temples; of old they spurned not to dwell in huts made by unskilled hands; the Tarpeian sire thundered from a bare crag, and Tiber still seemed strange to our cattle. Where Remus' house is perched yonder at the stairway's height the brothers of old counted their tiny hearth a mighty realm. The Senate-house, that towers on high filled with a shining throng of senators clad in the robe with purple hem, once held a rustic company, the city fathers robed in skins of beasts. The trumpet summoned the olden Quirites to debate: a hundred gathered in a meadow oft made a senate. No rippling awnings hung o'er the hollow theatre, nor reeked the stage with saffron, as 'tis wont to-day . . . Then no man sought to bring in strange gods, when the folk trembled in suspense before the ritual of their sires; but greatly they cared to celebrate the yearly feast of Pales with heaps of burning straw, making purification such as to-day we make with the blood of the maimed horse. Vesta was poor, and necklaced asses sufficed to make her glad, while lean kine dragged sacred emblems of little worth. The cross-roads, small as yet, were sprinkled with the blood of fatted swine, and the shepherd to the sound of pipes of reed made acceptable sacrifice with the entrails of sheep. "The ploughman girt with skins plied his shaggy scourge . . ."[1] says the poet Propertius to an astrologer in his elegy on the city of Rome. It sounds like a lament. The astrologer replies, reminding the poet of the Greeks, who once let themselves be decoyed by the glow of a fire craftily kindled by the enemy, ran into disaster and lost all the treasures which they had taken at the sack of Troy. "Time was when the fields were tilled by the many teams of the husbandmen; now (by order of Augustus) the land is parcelled out and every soldier has his lot . . . Your hard-won palms of victory are all playfully reft from your hands by a girl . . ."

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[1] Tibullus, *Elegies*, bk. ii, elegy iv (Loeb Classical Library).

[2] Tibullus, *Elegies*, bk. ii, elegy iv (1854, Bohn's Library).

Rome is at the summit of her fame. The seer is troubled. He sees the Rome of ancient days . . .

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[1] Propertius, *Elegies*, bk. iv (Loeb Classical Library).

There were as yet no streets. Men waded through slush in bad weather and trudged through thick dust in the glow of the summer sun. Here lies a broken ploughshare in the narrow lane, there a dead goat. A flourishing country trade was carried on in the little city. A couple of small dealers sat in wooden booths and sold to the folk who had come to town what the latter could not make with their hands. Cottages of clay, straw and wood served as dwellings ; besides these were a few houses of wood and stone, which were for the Senate and the consuls, and some others which belonged to rich peasants.

But in those men there dwelt a force which held the little peasant republic together in strict discipline. There were many States within the State. Every family was a state in itself and helped the whole State to govern. In the family, the father was the Government. To the son he was a model of efficiency, and he kept a strict eye on his wife, that she too might be an example to her daughter. The daughter spun the wool, helped her mother in the house, and, conscientiously tended the animals. The son, like his father, tilled the soil, sowed, reaped, and when the State ordered him, became a soldier and fought for his country. Simplicity in the habits of life preserved Roman hardihood.

In those days virtue dwelt in the heart of men. They did not speak much of it, they did not philosophize about it, they lived and acted up to their ideal. That was the nature of the Roman people. Thus did Rome, rigidly faithful to her character, after many wars become ruler of the world. And she became rich, too rich. Then tragedy befell her. What she had, by her efficiency, acquired and assimilated, began to destroy her character. In fact, Rome's fidelity to her character had the ultimate result of making Rome untrue to herself.

Could an Emperor now successfully prescribe laws against adultery! What does not come from the heart leads only to hypocrisy. Rome's great days now began to wane—a sunset glow over a morass. Eros, the seeker, has lost his way; in roaming, running, jumping, he meets with adventure after adventure, falls head over heels and often laughs at himself. He plays at hide-and-seek with himself; weeps, laughs, lies, cheats, seeks connexion with the most remote things, presents himself wearing a mask, becomes an animal, is cruel, thirsts for blood. His god's face is distorted into a devilish grin. He wants to die, seeks death and, ripe for death, precipitates himself once more into the wildest, most unrestrained life. He lets himself be caught; must go begging for money. The old god is dead. The new gods cannot awaken him. Before the hour of his death, they gave him a transfusion of fresh gods' blood; they gave newcomers divine abodes in Olympus, for they were trying to infuse fresh vitality into exhausted life. There was now a "heap" of gods together. The foreign element had brought them in and every strange god demanded the right of recognition. Roman writers made fun of this "medley of gods".

The old gods took counsel, how to deal with the influx of new gods. The supply of nectar and ambrosia, the food and drink of the gods, was beginning to diminish. What was "Mithras in Median caftan and tiara" doing in Olympus? Not to mention Anubis of the dog's head, son of Osiris, and his sister Nephthys? Or Apis the bull, who spoke in oracles? Dreadful! And then all the sacred goats, ibises, apes! The company was really too mixed. It was proposed in Olympus "to appoint a commission composed of seven fully authorized gods with the duty of examining the credentials of each individual god. Zeus, the most high god, did not put the proposal to the vote, because he foresaw that the majority would be against it. Without further ado, therefore, he passed it as a resolution, and directed all the gods to produce the necessary papers for the forthcoming examination, such as their parents' names and particulars of their origin and how they came to be gods".

Eros, smitten with madness, relieved them of every difficulty. He turned a somersault in the temples, and lo!—they transformed themselves into bawdy-houses! The women adorn themselves. The holy Isis awaits them in the temple. There they will find information and advice on love affairs. No long-winded prophecy is needed to say where the lover is. He is already in the temple, and awaits the beloved; this one to-day, to-morrow that. There is haste.—Psekas, the slave, has not hands to dress her mistress quickly enough. "Why is that curl so high!"—Her mistress's nerves are already on edge in anticipation of the dalliance in the temple. Poor Psekas, "with breast and shoulders bare," feels her mistress' whip. Another of the lady's slaves has already taken basketsful of eggs, fattened geese and sponge cakes to the sleek high priest—so that all may pass off well.

Isis, Mother of All, comes to the aid of all, especially those in delicate situations. That is why the Emperor Caligula had a great temple erected to her in the Campus Martius out of the money of the citizens of Rome. Women of high and low degree, little girls and courtesans, went to Isis. Isis in Rome had also to help in cases of attempted abortion. "Corinna's life is in danger, for that she wilfully struck at the life within her. Isis, by the revered head of Anubis I implore, turn the light of your countenance upon me, and spare two in one. For you can save the beloved's life, and her for me." Augustus had not spoken idly of the depopulation of Rome. He knew how recklessly many women treated their bodies. The satirist reproaches the Emperor's daughter Julia with " the uttermost vice, relieving the pregnant womb by abortive means ".

A most notorious male prostitute, Naevolus, is addressed by the satirist as follows : " Why is your face so sorrowful, dark and despairing, with a scrub of hair atop ? No gloss on the skin, either. Why so lean, like an ailing old man ? I mark the torment of the soul hidden within your suffering body, but I see the lust there too : your face betrays both. It seems that you have changed your habits and become an enemy of your former life. Of late, I know, as a paramour you have frequently profaned the temples of Ganymede and Isis, the temple of peace, the house of Cybele and the temple of Ceres—for show me the temple where willing women cannot be found." The satirist exaggerates, so they say. But he rummages in holes and corners where others pass and see nothing, or hold their peace if they do. Even in his indignation at his girl's infidelity, Tibullus yet remained the kingly, by no means satirical, but laconic announcer, when he reported that his beloved Delia too was at the temple of the much-lauded Isis. " In the temples assignations were made for adultery, between the altars panders plied their trade."

In his book, *The Art of Love*, Ovid recommended the temples to men in search of amorous adventures, and among the feasts which should not be missed he names the Jewish " Sabbaths ". The many foreign cults, all accompanied by a tremendous display of pomp, were bound to excite the senses. The new foreign element was in itself fascinating ; more especially were those cults which came from the Orient dangerous for credulous minds by reason of their intense mysticism and symbolism. They attracted people with irresistible force. When raving, half-naked priests mutilated their faces, arms, thighs with shining swords and caught the spurting blood in the hollow of their hands, to dedicate it to the goddess, the bewildering scene held another and deeper meaning; but even if it were unknown to the worshippers, the savage eroticism at least made itself felt. As a religious ceremony, it excited little interest; but it made a powerful impression on the senses of the onlookers.

Eros everywhere . . . "In Æneas' city[1] Venus alone directed the empire" (Ovid). The Roman traced his origin back to Æneas, the son of Venus. In ancient Rome a high value was set upon chastity; marriage was a sacred thing. But it was different later. Ovid was the mouthpiece of the age: "Chaste is she, whom no one desires. But if she be fair and not a fool, she has desires herself. . . . If only chaste women pleased us, what would become of the fair ones? You never find both in one" . . . "What a number of beauties there are flitting about!" . . . "Too foolish of your husband to mind adultery; really, he has too little knowledge of the customs of the city." A medley of women of all countries, of all races, gadding about, standing, sitting, lazed away their life in the metropolis. "The foreign courtesan with embroidered cap," the flute-blower, the woman with the sambuca, on which she harped, and "girls, who were ordered to display themselves for hire in the circus". "From early afternoon to next morning early numbers of naked prostitutes stood before the brothels or displayed their charms reclining in armchairs. All were waiting for those who were in search of them. The halls, public grounds, squares, gardens, baths were the meeting-places for men and women to come to terms. There was little or no reason for concern, since all they had to do was to take care not to be found out, for the sake of appearances. But syphilis was as yet unknown.

The indifference was sometimes appalling. Married people either just tolerated one another or shared the same bed; but both husband and wife had their own illicit relations elsewhere, whether openly confessed or clandestine. In an epigram of Martial's may be read: " Your wife says that you make love to the servants, while she herself is the mistress of a litter-bearer; you have nothing to reproach one another with." A nocturnal wrangle, a scene of jealousy between a married couple of the time: " I beseech you, say something good about me! Take my part." " I can't think of anything to say. Speak yourself, woman!" " Listen! It has long been an understood thing between us that you are at liberty to pick and choose whom you please, and that you mustn't blame me if I do the same. And you can shout until people think the sky is falling into the sea—I'm a human being!" " I'm a human being!"—What did the woman mean?

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[1] [Rome.]

When the whole world, as in Rome, gives itself up to dalliance, one set of morals ousts the other. At such a time nothing is of consequence beyond instinct or calculation and how instinct can best be given free play.

If the community still contains a number of persons who are called " unfree " and bought as slaves, all consideration for " morality " vanishes, for master and slave differ in externals only.

Slaves were bidden to erotic debauch, even though it was most strictly forbidden for married women to have any dealings with them. Intimacy with slaves offered a certain degree of security; the slave was discreet; he had to keep silence, in his own interests, about things which happened in the house. Martial paints, in the most glaring colours, a picture of the age. In an epigram " he enumerates the seven children of a certain Marulla, whose features make it only too evident which slaves of the house their fathers are—the Moorish cook, the flat-nosed athlete, the blear-eyed baker, the tender darling of the master, the long-headed, long-haired Cretan, the black flute-blower, and the red-haired steward ". Such a great variety of strains went far to bring about the change from the old order. "Rome is not so much populated by her own citizens, as by the lees of the whole world." Rome absorbed into her system all kinds of foreign elements and assimilated them. From the outset, almost from the foundation of the city, foreign blood was admixed with her own. With every new conquest came a new influx of strangers, who in due course demanded rights. The inevitable result of this was that the Roman himself often felt overlooked in his own land.

"Is he, whom the wind brought to Rome with plums and Syrian figs, to recline on finer cushions at table and take precedence of me? Is it no longer of worth that our childhood in Rome breathed the air of Mount Aventine and fed on Sabine fruits?" The conquered foreigner attained to the highest posts of honour in Rome. Caesar introduced Gauls into the Senate. The Roman populace was highly indignant at this, and the news-pillars proclaimed "that no man should be persuaded into showing a new senator the way to the curia".

They sang satirical ballads in Rome about the senators of Gallic nationality who had laid aside their native Celtic costume of baggy trousers reaching to the ankles and appeared in purple :—

> "A trousered man yesterday,
> Purple stripe on to-day!"

Rome was a mixture of peoples. There were Emperors of Spanish, Syrian, Moorish descent. Freedmen became the masters of Emperors.

The slaves contributed greatly to the denationalization of Rome. To be sure they often possessed qualities which were invaluable to the Romans. They were often useful counsellors to their masters and to their mistresses also; they did business and made purchases for them. Slaves, however, also had to pander to their masters' lusts and often stood all too high in the good graces of their mistresses. For the popular mock-marriages, too, they were very acceptable. Now and then a slave laid the foundations of the domestic happiness of a house, as the story of the matron Gegania will show. "Clesippus, a hunchbacked and otherwise ugly slave, who had learned the fuller's trade," relates Pliny, "was bought by a certain Gegania at an auction as a makeweight for her purchase of a Corinthian candelabrum. He became the lover of his mistress, who made him her heir. As the possessor of a very great fortune he worshipped, instead of the gods, that candelabrum to which he owed his position and his wealth."

The old happiness in Rome had transformed itself into a new. Essentially it no longer knew the moderation which had rejoiced in any trifle over and above bare necessity. Superfluity was the name of the new happiness. Everything was to be had for money.

Whoever had money might keep many slaves and be relieved of all work; might wear costly dress and bedeck himself with finery; might have villas sumptuously furnished, gardens, baths; might keep a luxuriously-appointed table; might . . .

"In luxury melts away the might of Mars!
To please thy palate peacocks are consigned
From Babylon, gorgeous in their plumage gay—
The fatted peacocks from their lazy pen.
For thee the guinea-fowl is doomed to die,
For thee the capon too; for thee the stork,
The perfect type of motherhood, a guest
Beloved by all, the slender-footed one,
With castanet-like wings, that shuns the frost,
Whose homeward flight is harbinger of spring—
She builds her last nest in thy greedy pot.
Why dost thou seek the pearl from India's sea?
Forsooth that thy disloyal spouse may flaunt

Her sea-born glories in a stranger's eyes?
Aye, and the emerald green, rare glassy gem,
Why dost thou love it? And the Punic stone
That flashes ruby flame, what is't to thee?
Save that thou revel in its purity!
Is it becoming that thy lady show
Her graces boldly in diaphanous gauze?"[1]

Juvenal, the accuser, writes: ". . . In days of yore their humble fortune preserved the Latin women chaste, and their lowly roofs were kept from the contamination of vice by toil, by short slumbers, by hands galled and hardened with the Tuscan fleece, and Hannibal close to the city, and their husbands standing on guard on the Colline tower. Now we suffer the evils of long peace; luxury, more cruel than war, broods over us and avenges a conquered world. No crime has been wanting, or deed of lust, from the time that Roman poverty came to an end; henceforth Sybaris flowed to these hills, and Rhodes and Miletus, and garlanded, insolent Tarentum. Filthy money first brought in foreign manners, and voluptuous wealth enervated the age with foul luxury". . . . Now . . . "the pipe stimulates the loins and the Mænades, inspired alike by the horn-instrument and by wine, whirl their locks and howl out Priapus . . ."[2]

Money had become Rome's ideal.

. . . "Produce at Rome a witness as virtuous as was the host of the Idæan deity, or let Numa stand forth, or he who saved the trembling Minerva from the burning temple; forthwith the inquiry will be as to his property and last of all as to his character. 'How many slaves does he keep? How many acres of land does he possess? How numerous and how large the dishes at his dinners?' In proportion to the amount of money each man keeps in his strong-box, so much respect does he obtain . . ."[3] The grasping

[1] *Petronius: The Satyricon*, p. 109. (Routledge, Broadway Translations.)

[2] Juvenal, *Satire VI* (Trans. J. D. Lewis, 1873).

[3] Juvenal, *Satire III*, vv. 137–144 (Trans. J. D. Lewis, 1873).

commercial mind had converted into terms of money that which had been sacred to the souls of men united with God. " . . . Here, where Numa used to make assignations with his nocturnal mistress, nowadays the grove of the holy fountain and the sacred precincts are let out to the Jews, whose furniture is a basket and some hay ; for every tree is bidden to pay rent to the people, and the Camenæ having been turned out, the wood is a mass of beggars . . ." [1]

Money, nothing but money ! The Emperor Caligula, the first man in Rome, wallowed in gold. . . . " Thus he would often walk in his bare feet or roll for a time in immense heaps of gold pieces which he caused to be strewn over a great hall." Once, at a banquet, he set bread and viands of gold before the guests. Unintentional symbolism of his age—of man's subordination to the things which he believes he rules !

But the judge who was to try Rome for her very life came in disguise, unsought and unrecognized by the prophet and the accuser of the age. Whoever acknowledges money as ruler, loses the creative force of life ; power, its dazzling substitute, steps in and lays her tyrannical commands upon him. Mammon, the new divinity, now fastened his hold upon the Emperors.

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[1] Ibid., vv. 12–16.

III

IMPERATOR

" Rome ! Would that you had only a single throat ! "—cried the Emperor. In a race at the circus the crowd had applauded a competitor instead of himself. He rushed out of the circus in a rage . . . A charioteer, in his joy at the fortunate issue of the contest, had set his slave free, and the people had greeted this with a storm of clapping. And the Emperor pitched, blind with fury, headlong down the steps, roaring, " The first people in the world, honouring a gladiator more than Me—Me, who honour it with My Presence ! " Woe betide the man who did not ooze admiration and slaver enthusiasm when He organized a contest ! " Away with the villain ! Let him toil at roadmaking in the fierce sun or breathe the choking air of the mines ! Perhaps he would prefer the latter ! Better still, shut him up in a cage, alone, that he may bewail his fate ; or give him a companion—a lion, a tigress. Ha ! I will have the fellow in the circus and see how he fights with wild beasts ! " commanded Caius Cæsar Caligula, Imperator. " I *am* ! No man is my equal ! "

Among the crowd at the circus sits Esius Proculus, the son of a senior officer. On account of his striking beauty and stature, he is called Colosseros,—Eros as Colossus. Composedly he watches the games. " Fetch him here ! " Colosseros is suddenly torn from the midst of the spectators, dragged into the arena and opposed to a practised fighter from Thrace. Colosseros overcomes his opponent. Caligula is irritated, indignant. A hoplomach, that is, a gladiator in the full equipment of a heavy-armed foot-soldier of Greece, is now called out to fight and destroy this magnificent man. Again Colosseros conquers. Caligula trembles with rage. Forthwith, he orders him to be bound ; his clothes are ripped from his body ; clad in rags, he is led through Rome. Let the women look at him now ! " And why should you be so strong and handsome ! " says Caligula to himself, and compares himself with Colosseros. Finally, Caligula has him strangled.

Caligula's body was big, his neck was thin, his meagre thighs supported an enormous belly ; in the "repulsive" face were "deep sunken eyes and temples", the forehead was "broad and lowering". His hair was "thin, with a bald patch on the top of his head". Who would dare to be more beautiful than the Emperor ? " He disfigured handsome men who had splendid heads of hair whenever he came across them by causing the backs of their heads to be shaved". The world should know, that there was only one Emperor. His dress alone should proclaim the fact. Caligula about went "dressed unlike a Roman, or a citizen. He was not even dressed like a man, or, for that matter, like a human being at all. He often showed himself in public in a gaily-embroidered blouse encrusted with jewels, with long sleeves and bracelets, at other times in silken drapery and women's clothes ; one day he would be shod with sandals or *cothurni*, the next with *caligæ*, like those of the soldiers of the guard, and sometimes in slippers such as women wear". Occasionally he wore "the armour of Alexander the Great, which he had caused to be taken from his tomb". I ! Nothing else had any meaning for the Emperor.

Ptolemæus, the son of King Juba, cousin of Caligula, was summoned from his kingdom to Rome, to festive days at the imperial court. At the circus were gladiatorial games, which Caligula had arranged. The royal guest entered the amphitheatre ; the splendour of his purple mantle drew all eyes to

Ptolemæus. Caligula saw. He sentenced his guest to death. The Emperor could and might do anything. "Bethink you," said Caligula to his grandmother Antonia, when she remonstrated with him for his cruelties, "that I may do what I like with whom I like." Who gave the Emperor such permission? Subjects, whose brains had given birth to the idea of imperial might.

Therefore senators ran on foot, by order, beside the imperial carriage, waited in linen aprons, like slaves, behind Caligula's chair or at his feet. A senator even submitted to the Emperor's awarding him a high public office "on the spot, *extra ordinem*", just because the Emperor was amused that the senator in question should have pounced "with immoderate greed and delight" upon the baskets of food which Caligula had ordered to be handed round in the theatre. Therefore, too, Caligula must appoint his horse—he could lash his tail, couldn't he?—to the rank of consul. But therefore, too, a senator must not be astonished if the Emperor counted on reciprocity and wanted to have a wish fulfilled; to see what a senator looked like torn to pieces. The experiment was made. The Emperor Caligula "instigated men to attack a senator, as he entered the curia, with the sudden cry of 'Enemy of the Emperor!' and after having stabbed him with their styles, to hand over the remains to be torn to pieces". He then ordered the "dismembered limbs and entrails, which had been dragged through the streets", to be collected and laid before him. The emperor's wish was gratified.

The moods of Emperors are often fitting material for the caricaturist. Caligula would have the young sons, furnished as hostages, of foreign princes "removed from the training school where they happened to be and secretly sent away from the army"; he would then leap suddenly from table in the midst of a feast, as if an inspiration had come to him, dash out and " give chase at the head of a body of horsemen, overtake them, and bring them back as deserters in chains ". Once, when Caligula, thanks to his position, was winning at dice by cheating, but his winnings were not mounting rapidly enough, he entrusted his game to the player next him and went out into the vestibule of the palace, where he ordered two Roman knights whom he saw passing to be arrested on the spot and their property confiscated. He then returned in high spirits to the banqueting hall, with the vainglorious remark "'Never have I made a better throw!'" And how, in his capricious despotism, did he treat the Jewish legation which had come all the way from Judæa for the express purpose of an audience in Rome? In Rome he gave them a friendly wave of the hand, then ignored them and went to Naples, because it was his pleasure to go boating in the bay. The Jews followed him there and laid their petition before him. But he went inspecting new buildings and villas. The Jews followed, and continued to do so until the Emperor suddenly turned round and shouted at them: " Is it true, that ye eat no pork?" With these words the Jewish question was settled, so far as the despot was concerned.

Caligula also knew the despot's power to show mercy. He pardoned an old dignitary, Pompeius Pennus, who had been sentenced to death, and, in return, let the aged man " kiss his gilded and pearl-encrusted left slipper ".

Power pushed to extremes produces an effect of childishness. Because there was not an adequate number of men for an intended triumph—there was no occasion for one at all, in fact—Caligula gave the order " to search all Gaul for the tallest and most suitable men for a triumph, including several Gallic chieftains, and keep them for the splendour of the procession. He compelled these men not only to dye their hair golden-yellow and grow it long, but also to learn the German language". It is a dangerous thing to sit next to despots when they are in jesting mood. The two consuls who sat on either side of him at table once asked him, in the most amiable manner, why he laughed—Caligula having suddenly broken out into "wild laughter"—and received the answer: "At what else, do you suppose, but the thought that it only requires a nod from me to have both your throats cut on the spot?"

But how accommodating too, in his way, the Emperor Caligula could be towards his subjects! He suffered men to die for his august person, and encouraged this intention in anyone who felt himself a true subject. The Emperor was ill. The air hummed with a thousand promises: "I would gladly die, if only the Emperor were restored to health." "Do you hesitate to fulfil your vow?" The Emperor had spoken, and slaves obeyed him. The victim was decked with a garland of sacrificial herbs and with the fillet, as was the custom in animal sacrifices; was led through the streets of Rome, to the cries of those who were escorting him: "Die for the Emperor, die! Fulfil your vow!" The procession wended its way to the wall, the place where malefactors were executed; there the imperial order was carried out, and the victims thrust headlong over the edge.

Where on every hand it was invited to unbridled excess, could the despot's will act otherwise? Was not the Emperor bound to regard himself as free from all restriction and absolute, when, following the custom introduced by Lucius, the father of the Emperor Publius Vitellius, he was worshipped by men as a god? Lucius brought the custom with him from Syria, and as he was a consummate flatterer, it was not difficult for him to become a model of servility. He never ventured to approach Caligula otherwise than with veiled head; he would draw his upper garment over head and ears, so that his forehead and brow alone were free—this was to prevent any word of evil omen from reaching the worshipper's ears—stretch out his hand towards the godhead Caligula, kiss it, and throw the kiss at the deity. He would then turn his body in a slow circle from left to right, which was to intimate that the others should reverently approach the spot where for the moment the godhead was pleased to dwell. He would then prostrate himself and kiss the earth and the tyrant's feet.

The Emperor Caligula did not hesitate to make the following announcement to his subjects : "Just as the guardian of a herd of oxen, goats, or other domestic animals is not himself an ox or in any way a member of the herd, but a human being who in worth and ability stands high above the animals under his charge, just so must it be understood that I too as the head guardian of the finest of all herds, the human herd, am something entirely different from the individual members of my herd—not human, but an infinitely more gifted divine being." Caligula was also the supreme head of all head guardians. Several kings were dining with him in his palace. From snatches of their conversation he became aware that they were disputing "the nobility of their descent". He instantly broke in upon their talk with : "One alone is ruler ! One is king !" Without a moment's delay, he wanted to put on his crown and all the insignia of a monarch, and he persisted in his intention until he was given the assurance that as the first man in Rome he already stood high above all other first men, even monarchs. Flattered, he thereupon named himself "Divine Majesty". Forthwith, the heads of all the popular gods, which were of high artistic value, were struck off their statues, and replaced by the effigy of Caligula. In the streets the Emperor was greeted by some as "Jupiter, tutelary god of the Latin race". Caligula the god built a temple to his own divinity ; ordained priests and devised the most ingenious varieties of sacrifices. Flamingoes, peacocks, woodcocks, Numidian hens, guinea hens and pheasants were slaughtered in series for sacrificial purposes. The wealthiest people in Rome competed " with the greatest eagerness and lavish expenditure for the office of *pontifex maximus* ". The temple contained a life-size statue of Caligula in gold, which was dressed every day precisely as he was.

The statue to the god Jupiter on the Capitol had long been a source of annoyance to Caligula. He would stand before it, whisper in its ear, put his ear to Jupiter's mouth, mutter, speak aloud, snarl : " Let us see if you can lift me, or I you." Thus did Ajax, in the myth, speak to Odysseus; the " wrestling match, in which neither was able to throw the other ", was long undecided. To make an end, " Ajax proposed that each should try and see if he could lift the other." But Caligula's feet, when he tried to lift Jupiter, remained on the ground ; the god stood stiff and stark. A draw. Very well, they should dwell together. The Emperor Caligula caused a bridge to be thrown across from the imperial palace on the Palatine to the Capitoline hill, where Jupiter had his temple.

Whence came this monster that threatened to crush Rome ? From what soil and from what seed did this Emperor spring ? Rome, the diminutive state, clinging tenaciously to its traditional customs ; Rome, that expelled its last king in order to be a free republic ; Rome, that plotted against the life of any citizen who tried to raise his head above the others, had become with its people—the elected master—a mass of subjects living in constant dread of a despot's will. And yet from its inception Rome's civilization had tended towards despotic imperial rule. For five hundred years the Roman had toiled hard in the fields, and wielded the sword in all parts of the world. He did both with the same inflexible sense of duty.

Rome conquered country after country and people after people. A proportion of these foreigners flowed into the city ; they were for the greater part poor and were not admitted to the higher offices. Thus the lowest stratum grew ever broader and the proletariat multiplied. The Senate was composed of men of the old residential, wealthy families. The plebeian was excluded. Family and state discipline, which was of the strictest, and restraint of every free impulse, led to uniform virtue and morality, and to iron obedience. Thus was the free state of Rome deeply anchored in conservatism.

Courage, energy, decision, loyalty to the mother-country and the family grew and developed, but were attended by a certain parochialism and resultant narrowness of outlook. The many conquests, which Rome by reason of her virtues had been able to make, were evidence of a strong consciousness of power; Rome, however, had to widen her sphere of influence if she was to maintain her exalted position. But the Senate, that sluggish state machine, could no longer keep up with the requirements of the age. The Senate wished to have sole control over everything, but found itself nevertheless obliged to hand over army contracts and other preparations for war to private enterprise. And now the uniform mass began to stir and to ferment. A contributing factor was the wealth which the continuous succession of conquests had brought to Rome. It prepared the way for the development of a period of commercial speculation with all its attendant evils—usury, debt, dear living, jobbery, flattery, spying and extravagance.

The capitalist began to play an important part in Rome. All classes were scheming for money, influence, and power. Ancient Rome, which for nearly five hundred years had existed without special titles for individuals, who were all simply part of Rome, was now changing its physiognomy. Side by side with enormous wealth was the poverty of the lowest class, the proletariat. Between the poles of conservatism and progress the seekers after power and the fortune-hunters moved to and fro, exploiting every opportunity to satisfy their selfish desires for fortune, fame, and power. The resistance which the poorer classes had long opposed to the richer now visibly increased. For even when new wars, financed by the capitalists, were waged, and immense sums of money flowed into Rome, the position of the lower classes was little improved.

At last it was enacted that tribunes, whose persons were sacred, should be set up as the true representatives of the people. By a mere veto they could upset any decision of the Senate. Equilibrium in the power of governing bodies seemed now to have been established, a check placed upon special influence and arbitrary control, and the stability of the Republic assured. But the antagonism between the conservatives and the popular party had not disappeared. Indeed, one day the conservatives deposed the tribune Tiberius Gracchus for advocating a distribution of public land among the people. The internal political situation in Rome grew more and more chaotic. The perpetual state of warfare and her internal conflicts had weakened Rome. And so Rome's old rival, the powerful merchant city of Carthage, raised her head, looked across the Mediterranean, expanded her communications and commerce, and became Rome's greatest economic adversary.

Fierce quarrels broke out in Rome over the future of Carthage and the corresponding fate of Rome. The capitalists were all for the destruction of the merchant city with its commercial competition, especially as they could not fail to profit by the campaign. In the end the commercial spirit prevailed. Carthage was destroyed. The folly of wealth and megalomania was rampant, triumphant in Rome ; but all that fell to the lot of the populace was taxation and penury. The old Roman spirit had long vanished. Every individual wanted to distinguish himself, as a general, as a capitalist. Revolution grew more and more imminent. Each of the two great parties in the State, the popular party and the conservatives, pursued its own interests, and each had soldiers and leaders to call upon.

While the leaders revelled in the utmost luxury and gained more and more power by means of bribery right and left, the discontent of the proletariat steadily increased. One day, in the Roman province of Asia, all creditors—Roman, Jewish, Egyptian bankers—were strangled by their debtors. Rebellion, assassination, theft, robbery soon became the order of the day. The army was disorganized ; the financial resources of the State were depleted. The revolution was at hand. Whoever now hoped to secure something for himself threw in his lot with the popular party, with which moreover the majority of the capitalists now sided, setting themselves up in opposition to the conservative, aristocratic party. It was the age in which the " mercenary captain, made all-powerful by money and iron ", first came into existence. Capitalism and militarism went hand in hand.

The civil wars, which to some were only to serve as a means to boundless wealth and power, lasted for close on a hundred years. As ever, the result brought no advantage to the revolutionary proletariat which helped the rulers to power. Conservatism and progress had become mere catchwords. Everybody was selfish, and turned to the party which offered the best prospects.

In the midst of this political confusion, at a time when all sense of citizenship had vanished, when luxury and ostentation were developed to extremes and life was only valued in terms of money, the figure of Cæsar appeared.

Caius Julius Cæsar, true son of his licentious, ambitious, entirely mercenary age, endeavoured in every conceivable way to win over the people to his side. In order to make himself the people's leader, it did not seem to him out of place to cultivate intimate relations with the leaders of the popular party. Every means of securing personal ascendancy for himself seemed right to him. When the conservative Senate deprived him of an office, he turned to the proletariat and harangued them, telling them that they were the victims of the injustice of the great. Thus spoke Cæsar, who himself aspired to be the greatest of the great. Cæsar, " chieftain of the scum of Rome," the poverty-stricken proletariat, then threw himself into the arms of the capitalists. He " undertook to secure the directors of the Asiatic tax-collectors' company a reduction in the price of the lease ; in return for this service he received a number of share certificates from the directors." Cæsar and his associates were " only the heads of a political rabble for which the wealthy and cultured upper classes had nothing but abhorrence." Should Cæsar, however, attain to absolute power, they would all have to bend the knee to him.

What was the influence which, in Rome, enabled the proletariat to triumph and suddenly cripple the Senate, which for hundreds of years had guided Rome's destinies and led her to world empire ? The imperialistic spirit had entered Rome, followed by the " mercantile spirit ". And it was the proletariat which introduced it. Thereupon the honest Roman citizen disappeared, and was replaced by self-seeking individuals who spent their lives in luxury, dissipation, or crime. But the people, who had revolted for the sake of life and livelihood, benefited little by the change; for they had been duped. Cæsar, the " dread, the universally popular leader of the Roman mob ", now incurred the suspicion of the people; for having obtained power, he began to ingratiate himself with the upper classes. And " . . . not content with constant re-election to the office of consul, the permanent dictatorship, the supreme censorship, the name of Imperator, the honorary title of 'Father of his country', the erection of his statue among those of the kings of Rome, the royal seat in the orchestra, he suffered them to decree him honours which were in excess of what was reasonably due to the highest degree of human grandeur : a golden arm-chair in the Senate and in the court of Justice, a god's car with a god's shrine for his statue, which was borne in procession with the images of the gods ; temples, altars, a statue beside those of the gods, a seat at the festal table set apart for the gods, a special class of priests. He gave equally convincing proof of his despotic arrogance in his public orations : 'The Republic is nothing, a mere name without visible life or body.' 'People should address him with reverence, and regard his decisions as laws !' "

His efforts to secure absolute sovereignty seemed all too transparent. The people were dissatisfied with the state of affairs.

Cæsar was struck down by conspirators' daggers. Wearied by the everlasting revolutions and wars, men came to hate war and longed for peace at last. A strong leader, but not an absolute ruler, was wanted to take the people's destinies into his trustworthy hands, and defy the conservative element, the Senate. The new man came : he was Cæsar Octavianus Augustus, the man of the people. His task was to recover just treatment for an oppressed people. Soon the Senate was shorn of its power, conservatism worsted, the old patrician families uprooted, thousands upon thousands of members of the old residential Roman families decapitated. Octavianus Augustus himself caused an incalculable number of patricians to be beheaded. In time Rome was rid of all ancient tradition and custom.

All expectations and hope now centred on the man of the people, on Octavianus Augustus, whose great-grandfather was a ropemaker and his grandfather a money-changer. Friends and enemies of the reformation were agreed that this *princeps* of the Republic was a man of the people. The former rejoiced to see a man of their own class at the head of the State, the latter were annoyed, and ridiculed the upstart. Marcus Antonius, who for a time had been a political opponent and rival of Octavianus, taunted him by saying that his maternal great-grandfather was " of African origin and had by turns been a dealer in ointment and a miller in Aricia ". In a letter the writer Cassius Parma, an adherent of the old republican party, " vilified Octavianus Augustus as a descendant, not only of a miller but of a petty money-changer : ' Your mother's flour was from the sorriest mill in Aricia, which the street-banker of Nerulum (in Campania) built with hands filthy from handling coin.' "

Already, before his rise to power, Octavianus Augustus had shown duplicity towards his political friends and adversaries. His outward mien seldom betrayed his mind. In his dealings with the people, however, he was careful enough to conceal the true image of his soul, and wished them to believe that at heart he was one of themselves ; for Cæsar's conduct and fate were a warning to him. For this reason he desired that his house should not be conspicuous by its architectural beauty, decoration, or size ; it should be simple. He avoided marble, the columns in the halls were of plain, cheap, volcanic tufa, in the rooms, too, no marble was used, and no mosaic was to be seen. The household utensils also were such as might be found in the house of a private individual of average means. At table three, never more than six, courses were served. Augustus did not want to create the impression that he was a glutton.

He also kept the customary entertainments at table within limits, and never followed the example set by seekers after power of the revolutionary period, like Sulla, who in his luxurious house had always been surrounded by a swarm of actors, female singers, and dancers. He wanted to maintain the standard of life observed in the home of a respectable Roman citizen. He entertained his guests at table, according to their taste and choice, with lecturers, singers, actors, simple buffoons from the circus ; and, shrewd man that he was, did not fail to provide a so-called moralist to fill in the intervals with unctuous exhortations. Outwardly, he attached great value to the old virtues. The people saw the external side of this mode of life, and heard of it, which was what Augustus desired ; although, behind these virtuous appearances, he planned a life, the life of a *princeps*, of a very different kind.

Augustus knew himself and his age, and concealed his intentions, considering himself obliged to adopt this course in order to remain First Man of the State. It is significant that immediately after his election as President of the Republic he issued a statement in which he declared that he hoped " . . . so far as lies within my power, to establish the Republic safe and sound upon its foundations, and, in return, to enjoy the reward which I desire : to be known as the creator of Rome's prosperity, and, when I die, to take with me to the grave the hope that the foundations of the Republic which I laid will endure ".

Did Augustus hope by such promises to bring ideal conditions to Rome, not only for the present, but for the future also ? At all events, the Republic seemed to be firmly established. The popular party saw their representative, the *princeps*, recognized by the conservatives ; the *princeps* himself behaved like a man of the people.

The long wished-for peace had come with the election of Octavianus to the position of supreme head of the Republic ; the people now wanted to be allowed, at long last, to enjoy the pleasures of life in peace. And so they did, in the most extravagant fashion. The old traditional constraint was finally removed. Rome, the metropolis, became the focus of the glories of the world, of the splendour and radiance of existence, of enjoyment of the good things of this earth. Men also cast off publicly the last vestiges of the old moral restraint. The new freedom had, to be sure, reversed the old order of values : where courage and determination had once overthrown the enemies of freedom, cowardice lurked and flattery strutted ; energy turned to lassitude ; the disciplined became undisciplined ; faith in the gods changed to superstition ; loyalty and trust were displaced by treason and treachery ; corruption supplanted honesty ; moderation was succeeded by gluttony ; laws were only there to be evaded ; every kind of encroachment upon another's rights was permissible ; a man no longer refrained from crime unless it brought him no advantage. Egoistic individuality triumphed unrestrained ; that was the spirit of the new age.

With the utmost levity men ignored everything reminiscent of the old morality and principles. Those who could not pay their debts sought refuge in bankruptcy, recruited their resources thereby, and squandered them in Baiae, that most luxurious of all watering-places. There was a craze for ostentation ; and to satisfy it, the people went into debt and practised usury and fraud. Life was to be given the freest expression in every direction, and was to be employed in a perpetual search for novel pleasures.

Augustus did what he could ; he created a semblance of the good old days in a Rome whose civilization was composed of fragmentary elements from the past and new elements from every country under the sun, and whose population was most heterogeneous. But the victory of the popular party had become a victory of capitalism ; so Augustus could only hope for success from measures which would be executed with the help of capital and did not stand in the capitalist's way. His was a precarious progress between two antagonistic forces, capitalism and proletarianism. For Rome's external welfare and the grandeur of the city Augustus, as *princeps*, did a great deal. Wherever feasible he made suitable provision for the maintenance of law and order, and instituted measures to facilitate communications and trade. He gave the people grain, and recreation through the medium of the circus games. In the course of time Rome's gratitude found expression in the erection in the capital of eighty silver statues to its *princeps*, which showed him in turns standing on the ground, seated on horseback, or erect in a quadriga ; and again in hundreds of bronze and marble statues. In the provinces were thousands of statues of Augustus.

But the final product of this revolution was the Imperator. In frivolity and exuberance Rome had lost her reason ; the faculties of judgment and criticism were dormant, and men trusted to their senses only. Men saw that Augustus had the silver statues portraying him as a great man melted down to make images of the gods for the temples ; but they did not see the cleverly concealed purpose behind this action. Augustus' ideal was Alexander the Great. " Because he wanted to see a king," as he said, he caused—this was before his election to the position of *princeps*—the coffin containing the body of the great monarch to be taken out of its sepulchre and replaced with the addition of a golden crown for the dead man's head. Augustus remembered, however, that his great-uncle Cæsar had been murdered by the popular party, and knew that he must conceal his real sentiments. He was extremely cautious. Besides, he was anxious to avoid anything which might affect his relations with the conservative Senate. He therefore approached the realization of his ambitions by a most circuitous route.

The Senate had no jurisdiction in the provinces, so Augustus shifted thither the centre of gravity of his power, so that he might be regarded there as absolute ruler. In many provinces the inhabitants were already accustomed to such rule, as in the Asiatic dominions ; whenever, therefore, envoys arrived from them, or Augustus issued orders, he was already recognized as the sole ruler. As for Rome itself, he felt that the right moment had not yet come. Where Cæsar had failed, Augustus succeeded, among Romans dazzled and intoxicated by a life of pleasure. He was the elected representative of the Republic, and its President. What could prevent him from transferring to himself for life the office of people's tribune ? The Senate was now crippled ; the people's tribune could immediately oppose his veto to the Senate's decision. Thus did the Senate become a plaything and a tool in the hand of the Emperor.

The popular party now took decisions over the heads of the conservatives. Since, however, the *princeps* Augustus was the head of the popular party, he alone held State and Empire in his hands. Step by step, Augustus advanced towards the permanent position of " First and Only ". All that he now needed for absolute power was the official name and title. With an eye to the future Augustus had given himself the title of Cæsar directly he assumed the presidential seat. Then, almost immediately, he invented for himself the name of " Augustus ", that is, the " consecrated ". At the time, the intimidated Senate had even offered him the honorary title of " Romulus "—the name of the founder and first king of Rome—because Augustus had re-established and reconstructed the old Rome. Augustus already held the title of Imperator in his capacity of commander-in-chief. To all this he now added the title *Pontifex Maximus*—that of chief priest and overlord of the gods' representatives on earth, and assumed the office. He did not fail to insist upon his infallibility in the execution of his functions.

With this the people of Rome were handed over body and soul to the *princeps*. From now on all power was incorporated in the Imperator. From this moment the people became subjects again. Senate and people were never in accord ; but when it was a question of rendering homage to the lord paramount, they vied with one another in demonstrations of respect. It was doubtless in memory of the good old days, when the *paterfamilias* was lord of life and death over the members of his family, that the people and the Senate begged Augustus to accept the title of " Father of his country ",—what time in his own home the members of the imperial family were already quarrelling among themselves over the question of succession and inheritance. As *princeps*, Augustus moved like a dancer on the tightrope, testing each step carefully.

On his death-bed Augustus called for a mirror and combed his hair ; he then asked his friends who were standing round if they thought that he had acted his part in the play of life nicely ; and added in Greek, not Latin, the verse which, at the end of a play, one of the actors usually addressed to the audience :—

> " If all be right, with joy your voices raise,
> In loud applauses to the actor's praise."

Cæsar Octavianus Augustus had entered upon the office of President of the Roman Republic as a man of the people. When he died, a senator—Numerius Atticus was his name—saw the figure of Augustus ascending to heaven from the pyre on which his body was burnt, and swore to the truth of what he had seen. Livia, the wife of Augustus, rewarded Atticus for this testimony with a gift of one hundred and fifty thousand denarii—roughly, ten thousand pounds.

Livia knew well how to appeal to the religious side of the Roman people. The age had lost the old dogma, upheld by authority and education, and was ready to take up a new one. " Five days did the Empress-Widow, surrounded by the heads of the Order of Equites, keep vigil at the place where, on the Plain of Mars, the flames of the funeral pyre had consumed the mortal remains of the ruler of the world, and an eagle, released for the occasion, had borne his soul to heaven." Livia herself took the ashes and the charred remains of her husband and deposited them in the mausoleum which Augustus had built for members of the imperial family. Round this Augustus had had a great public park laid out with a maze of paths and recreation grounds, so that he, the man of the people, might constantly remind the people that the *pater patriae* was amongst his children and that he and his were, even beyond the grave, united with the people.

Livia was no less astute than her husband. Augustus, " Master of the World," was proclaimed divine, priests were appointed to officiate at his worship, sacrifices were made, and Livia herself assumed the office of high priestess.

Thus did Livia carry out her duty to herself, for she knew well that many battles awaited her if she was to retain what she and Augustus had built up together. The people's belief in the divinity of Augustus was to be her ally in the struggle. The rise of the President of the Republic to sovereign power had been rapid. For the ancient feud between the conservative nobility and the progressive popular party had made even an Imperator welcome to a people harassed and longing for peace. A sovereign ruler had become necessary ; it had become imperative to hold the people together, since its own leaders had lost grip. Did the great actor Augustus really hold with the fundamental principle that a ruler must profess to follow the people's will while really enforcing his own ?

At all events, Augustus' calculation was correct when he assumed that he had to deal with a mass which persisted in its desire for the concentration of power in a single person ; it was easy for him to deceive the masses with appearances. The freedom of the Roman people, which had been a self-imposed restriction, a voluntary constitutionalism, was gone for ever. Rome exchanged it for another freedom, that of the senses, which abused its privileges to the last degree. Men gave themselves up to the most comprehensive, imperative, despotic sensuality. The imperialistic spirit soon gained a hold over all, and, in externals, many endeavoured to imitate the Emperor. Miniatures of the Emperor of all kinds and sizes were to be had. Men aped Cæsar in all that he did ; even the way in which he did his hair was copied by his subjects.

Life was a pleasant thing for the man who basked in the sun of the imperial favour ; flattery brought fame, honour, fortune. In this way, however, the distance between Emperor and subject grew wider and ever wider, and the army of citizen-flunkeys swelled in proportion to the ever-increasing development of imperialistic dominion. Moreover, the Roman citizen's equality of five hundred years' standing had been superseded by another—the equality of the first citizen, the Emperor, with all other citizens. This was brought about by the spirit of the age ; ruler and subject were alike in employing hypocrisy, dishonesty, and injustice as means to gain wealth. At the zenith of her power

Rome was governed by the spirit of despotism; she was a mercenary democratic State, beset by the dangers which, at all times, for Emperor and subject alike, are attendant upon undisciplined desires.

In this capitalist-militaristic state there was no room for the development of spiritual greatness. The man of character who desired to retain his self-respect had to leave that wanton civilization and lead his life for himself, collecting spiritual riches and distributing them to others, like Demetrius, the cynical philosopher, who " in the midst of the splendour and voluptuousness of Rome, the golden ", found it possible to obey " the call of complete self-denial and return to nature ". He it was who, enveloped in rags on a heap of straw, actually " refused a gift from Caligula of two hundred thousand sesterces ". The philosopher Seneca, " who often left the society of the wearers of purple " to listen to the truths of Demetrius, said : " I make no doubt that Providence endowed him with virtue and great eloquence in order that our age should not be without an example and a living reproach." But Seneca also said of him : " Nature produced him in our time to show that he could neither be spoilt by us nor we improved by him."

It was quite in keeping with the venal spirit of the age that Seneca, the moralizing philosopher, teacher of princes and imperial adviser, availed himself of his position to amass an enormous fortune. Upon Britain he " forced a loan of forty million sesterces (£435,000) ; his sudden and forcible levy of this amount was the reason for the revolt of that province in A.D. 60. Indeed, in his declining years he carried out transactions through agents, and received with the arrival of the corn fleet letters concerning the state of his affairs in Britain ". He was a slave-driving capitalist, lived as an imperialist, had intimate relations—following the demands of the age—with

Julia, the niece of the Emperor Claudius, and completely failed to practise the strict morality which he preached. Yet he would say, raising his eyes to heaven in the Augustan manner : " The end of all knowledge is to hold life in contempt." The stoics, to whom Seneca was much attached, were in those days reproached with " being filled with empty arrogance. A long beard, raised eyebrows, a coarse cloak, and bare feet were sufficient to let a man pass himself off as wise, manly, and just, and pride himself on being all these, though he did not possess the first elements of knowledge ".

The outward show was sufficient. Imperialism was at the root of everything. And this was why even philosophy could not influence the conduct of life. At banquets men talked much of virtue while they got drunk and overate. The moral conversations which the Emperor Augustus had introduced at his banquets were only talk. In Rome men lacked self-guidance ; the imperialistic mass had grown lazy. They contented themselves with gestures, as practised in the schools of oratory when a " whole class of pupils, in the elocution lesson, slew a cruel tyrant ". But though the breast was inflated, " beneath the left breast nothing stirred."

The last of ancient Rome's fundamental principles of education—authority—merged quietly into imperialism. The head of the family was formerly the lord of life and death over the members of his family, of whom he could dispose as he would of property—like the State, which in the same way owned the citizens. Pursued to extremes, this relation transformed " virtue " into the reverse and thus obscured the truth. From the very outset of its existence Rome had demanded of the slaves implicit acknowledgment not only of patriarchal authority but also of the right of possession. Slaves were employed for every kind of task, they were bought and sold at will, could be put to death or allowed to live.

It will thus be seen that every head of a family was a despot in his sphere of influence ; the whole State was an intricate fabric of miniature states under a single despot. The existence of slavery also helped considerably to familiarize Rome with the new imperialism. The middle-class citizen kept one or two slaves. The *præfectus urbi* Pedanius Secundus (A.D. 61) kept four hundred slaves in his palace. The singer Tigellius, who lived in Augustus' time and "went from one extreme to another", alternated between two hundred slaves and ten. As if it were not enough, that slaves should provide excitement for the crowd at the circus as charioteers and especially as gladiators, their owners used to hire them out for the purpose and make money. Cicero's friend Atticus bought a whole company of slaves. Cicero wrote to his friend : "I hear that they fought magnificently ; if you had cared to hire them out you would have had your money back after two shows." If the master of the house died, he could will his slaves to another master.

In the slave-families of great houses were actors who played comedies and tragedies before the family and the numerous guests. "Out of the hundreds and thousands of slaves of a patrician house it was not difficult to form choirs and companies of all kinds and to complete them by purchasing fresh talent." Slaves made and painted objects of art for the house. "I should like to have for slave an engraver and a lightning portrait-artist, when I am old ; for then I should have enough to live on." "Hail to the genius of this place. Craftsmen, may good fortune attend your goldsmith's labours in this booth," ran the inscription over a shop.

Whoever owned a number of slaves kept them as cobblers, bakers, tailors, hairdressers, or employed them in various other capacities, such as "torch-bearers, lantern-bearers, head litter-bearers, street escorts, fasteners of dresses before going out", grooms, huntsmen, cooks, footmen, runners, coachmen. In place of a clock, a slave announced the passing hours to his master. How convenient it was to have slaves! "Use your slaves as the servants of your body, one for each particular purpose." The slave attended to the domestic duties, and worked in the garden and in the fields; he was the machine which had not yet been invented. He read aloud, wrote to dictation, made extracts of what had been read. The slave was better acquainted with his master's household and affairs than the master himself. He knew how to make himself indispensable, and was consequently a person of greater importance in the household than its head. People kept on good terms with their slaves, in order that they might not gossip about intimate household matters outside. "Moreover, for the women, the certainty that they could choose from among their slaves lovers who were invariably submissive and discreet was beyond doubt a temptation, and it is difficult to believe that such relationships were exceptional." It will thus be seen that the care of tender intimacies fell to the slave too. The slave had almost become his master's soul.

"We salute you from another's memory," was a saying of the time. The slave was his master's living notebook; he had to know the names and addresses of the clients and adherents of the house; he thought and acted for his master. He had to call his master at the hours when the latter desired to bathe or dine. In the street some masters would cause their slaves to run ahead of the litter and announce, "now comes an obstacle, now we are going downhill, now uphill." The master often let himself be pampered by his slave to such a degree that in his limpness of mind he no longer knew whether he was hungry or not; the slave had to think of that too, and act accordingly. "One of these weaklings, after he had been lifted out of his bath and lowered into an arm-chair, asked: 'Am I sitting now?'" At banquets a slave would stand behind his master and quote some passage, appropriate to the conversation, from the works of a philosopher or poet, which the booby then repeated.

And thus the slave gradually rose higher and even higher. The slave, who was still beneath the plebeian and originally enjoyed no legal rights, became step by step, as a freedman, master of his master and the Emperor's Emperor. And master and Emperor grew lazy. Tragicomedy of imperialism! From every campaign Rome had brought back slaves in abundance. Young and old, male and female human beings of every class, of every grade of intelligence and variety of profession were torn from their homes; in chains, bound together several at a time, or trussed singly to beams, they were conducted in long columns to Rome overland, or transhipped from a port where the great slave-dealers plied their trade. Exposed to every inclemency of the weather, parched by heat, drenched by rain, chilled to the bone, they were treated worse than a herd of cattle. If a slave dared to oppose his master he was executed together with his fellows. The four hundred slaves of Pedanius Secundus were executed because one of them—humanly speaking, justly—had murdered his master.

These men were never again to see their native land, from which they had been torn; deprived of legal rights, they were sold like goods and looked upon as part of their master's chattels and estate. The great riches of a Lucullus, a Cæsar, and other despots were largely derived from traffic in human beings. The State needed slaves; without them it could not exist, said the famous philosopher, who wrote at such length about the State. His equally famous pupil, who regarded "slaves as living property", even produced evidence to show that slavery "was a natural condition". But not until, in the imperial era, the slave proved himself to be a more useful being than many of his masters, was the philosophic view heard "that we should above all look upon slaves as human beings, as friends on a lower scale, and, in so far as they are, in common with us, subject to the same higher authority, as fellow slaves". It was the spirit of the age, and not the State, that was responsible for the rapid change in Rome's character which turned whilom slaves into masters and masters into slaves.

The Emperor Caligula who, more than anybody, imagined himself to be the master, had at his side a slave, Callistus, who behaved as if he were omnipotent. Caligula had bought this slave from another master, and made him a favourite after he had been freed. Callistus insinuated himself into one office after another by trickery, and "did not shrink from any wrong, but lorded it in the face of right and law entirely as he pleased" under Caligula's eyes and with Caligula's approval. But he was wily enough to prepare the ground secretly for an understanding with Caligula's uncle Claudius, since the latter would one day be Emperor, and the covetous Caligula might at any moment have him, Callistus, put out of the way. For through his dishonourable conduct Callistus had grown enormously rich. In his banqueting-hall stood thirty columns of oriental alabaster. This freedman lived like the Emperor; he did as he pleased and entirely dominated Caligula. Like every slave who rose to eminence in this manner, Callistus was incredibly arrogant. His former master often tried, and tried in vain, to gain admittance to his house. Callistus participated in the conspiracy against his master Caligula, and, after the murder of Caligula, he succeeded in maintaining his former position under his successor, the Emperor Claudius, Messalina's husband. Thus we see that Callistus the freedman came to be even more powerful than the supreme head of the State.

More and more were the masters reduced to the level of slaves. " The flower of Rome's aristocracy vied with one another in doing honour and rendering homage to the all-powerful servants of the Emperor, notwithstanding the deep contempt and abhorrence in which they, the descendants of a glorious, age-old ancestry, held these men, indelibly branded with the stigma of slavery, who moreover in more than one respect were rightly reckoned lower than the free-born beggar." In virtue of his omnipotence the all-powerful Emperor conferred distinctions upon the slaves in order to see his own power reflected in them, and did not know that he was thereby making himself their subject. The freedmen, unmindful of the opportunities of their own former state, themselves kept numerous slaves, whom they allowed no rights, to do their work for them. Callistus had several physicians among his slaves. " The reign of Claudius," Messalina's imperial consort, " was the Saturnalian period of the freedmen." In a lampoon upon the " Deification of the Emperor Claudius upon his entry into Heaven " stands the sentence, " You would have thought that all those present were his freedmen, for nobody took the faintest notice of him."

Under the Emperor Claudius the freedmen held the reins of government—especially Callistus, whom Claudius took over after the assassination of Caligula, Pallas and Narcissus. " Of all the freedmen," writes the biographer of the Emperor Claudius, " those who stood highest in the Emperor's favour were Narcissus, his cabinet secretary, and Pallas, his financial intendant, upon whom, by vote of the Senate, not only enormous pecuniary awards but also quæstorial and prætorial rank were conferred." Claudius allowed these men " to rob to such an extent that once, when he complained about the lack of funds in the treasury, he was given the not improper answer that he would have money enough and to spare if his two freedmen were to take him as their partner." Callistus, Pallas, and Narcissus, these " bold and crafty men ", played the masters, the Emperor Claudius the servant. According to the liking and whims of his freedmen, the Emperor distributed posts of honour, army commands, pardons, and penalties, the freedmen reaping enormous profits in the process. In their machinations the three all-powerful men frequently took refuge behind Messalina, the Empress, a young and guileless woman, and let her share in their spoils ; in this manner they were covered, if chance should play them a trick in their evil doings.

Just as Claudius raised Narcissus to officer's rank he presented another freedman, the eunuch Posides, with the " marshal's baton " ; he promoted Pallas' brother Felix to the rank of master of the Roman horse, general of cavalry, minister for war, and made him in addition governor of the province of Judæa. Felix, however, was not content with having power and money in abundance. If he could not be king, he at least succeeded in being three times the husband of a queen. He first married Drusilla, a daughter of King Juba of Mauretania ; then by treachery and misrepresentation he induced Drusilla, daughter of the Jewish king Agrippa and wife of Azizus, king of Emesa, to leave her husband and marry him ; subsequently he lived in matrimony with another queen. A family tree was cunningly devised for the freedman Pallas to trace his descent from a king of Arcadia and thus stamp him as the scion of an ancient and noble family.

Such was the state of affairs at the time when the people's government, with its President-Emperor at the head, was supreme. At a later period there was an Emperor, Vitellius, who was descended from a freedman cobbler. On one occasion, before Claudius had become Emperor, the slave Pollux dared to bring a complaint against Claudius before his master Caligula, in spite of the fact that Claudius was Caligula's uncle ; and the nephew gave it a favourable hearing. The result of this was that throughout Rome the slaves conducted themselves with the utmost arrogance and presumption. Like " subjects who in their own lives emulate the workings of their sovereign's mind, the masters now followed the lead of the freedmen and surrounded them with flattery ". They imitated, for instance, the example set by Claudius' eunuch Posides. This man, who had become fabulously rich and lived in the utmost luxury, conceived the idea of baths heated by water laid on from the mineral springs at Baiæ. Thereafter, the fashionable world took only " Posidian baths ". Lucius Vitellius, father of the Emperor Vitellius, numbered among his household gods golden busts of Narcissus and Pallas. Almost all the administrative offices were held by freedmen. The subjects of these vice-emperors had to put up with a great deal and could only attain their rights by bribery and flattery. In Rome the Roman went to the wall. But satire did not fail to raise its voice. " How is it," asked the philosopher Epictetus, " that a man suddenly becomes intelligent when the Emperor makes him inspector of a jakes ? "

The behaviour of an Emperor was certainly not a difficult thing to learn. The freedmen were in constant attendance upon their masters as valets, stewards, and the like, and paid the closest attention to everything they did. One of the Emperors, however, Tiberius, successor of Augustus and predecessor of Caligula, was too much of an aristocrat by nature to permit slaves " consciously and publicly to have any influence upon his will". In the grounds of his villa at Misenum " one of the upper slaves of his household, with dress girt up to the knees, sprucely clad and groomed, ran ahead of him, officiously sprinkling every path the Emperor was to tread. At last Tiberius beckoned to him ". Overjoyed at the success of his stratagem to approach the Emperor, the slave ran up eagerly. Tiberius, however, delivered himself as follows : " Your efforts are in vain, the honour of a box on the ears from my hand is not to be bought so cheaply."

No one was quicker to learn the usages of the new State than the slaves and freedmen. By their conduct and talk they proclaimed abroad how matters were ordered at court. The subjects accepted their guidance and paid them well—as did for example those groups who waited in front of the palace in the grey dawn, in order to learn what had happened at court overnight and what course the events of the coming day were likely to take ; for men were wont to shape their lives in accordance with such news. In this capitalistic State, where the material and the sensual alone counted, it was not difficult for a man to bear himself like an Emperor ; all that was necessary was money and a brutal lack of consideration for others. Both existed. Money was to be made, if not by business transactions on a large scale, then in dishonest ways. If a man had spent all his money, he made debts. His sole preoccupation was how to attract attention, that he, too, might be looked upon as one of the pre-eminent. The rich vied with one another in building luxurious villas, in keeping slaves, and, not least, in gluttony.

Here again the freedmen's banquets reflected the example set at court. In general, with the coming of riches, the Roman people had become epicures, with the natural exception of the plebeian households. Somewhere in the period 73–63 B.C. an inaugural banquet was given for the priest Marcus Lentulus Niger. The bill of fare ran as follows: "*Hors d'œuvres*: Sea-urchin, raw oysters, two kinds of shellfish, throstle on asparagus, fattened fowls, oyster and mussel ragout, black and white chestnuts, mussels, sea creatures with beccaficos, haunch of venison and wild boar, chicken pie, purple molluscs and more beccaficos." The main meal, which followed, consisted of "sow's udder, duck, another kind of duck boiled, hare, roast chicken, sweets, Picentine bread." Dessert was not mentioned, but even without it, this was a generous repast.

Whenever the Emperor Claudius gave a public banquet, the guard was mounted and everything carried out with the utmost pomp and circumstance, as though gods had been invited. The poet Martial, who was born at Bilbilis in Spain about A.D. 40, had come to live in Rome, and was one of the Emperor's flatterers, said that "if he were invited to table by the Emperor Domitian and Jupiter at the same time, he would not hesitate, even if heaven were nearer than the imperial palace". The poet Statius, born at Naples A.D. 45, who had several times won the Roman prize for poetry with his wordy, bombastic compositions, was invited to the imperial table. "Statius had only eyes for Him; not for the thousand tables, the *citrus* tables with their ivory legs, nor the swarm of attendants—only for Him, who in jovial majesty tempered the rays of his own splendour." The display at the banquets of the Cæsars and of the magnates who had once been slaves was of incomparable magnificence. They were accompanied by entertainments and by all sorts of jokes which, it must be recorded, were frequently at the expense of the guests.

This is how the Emperor Domitian once played host to the heads of the Senate and of the Equites:—

"He had the ceiling, walls, and floor of a room completely covered in black, and uncushioned benches of the same colour placed in it. The guests were conducted into it, by night, alone and unattended. Each found at his side a column with his name inscribed on it as at the head of a grave, flanked by a little lamp of the kind suspended in tombs. Some shapely boys then appeared—painted black, too, like phantoms—circled round the guests in a weird dance, then took up positions at the feet of each. Now, as was customary at funeral feasts, the repast was served in black vessels. Everyone trembled, expecting the death-stroke at any moment, especially as deathly silence reigned, save for the single voice of Domitian, and his talk was solely of things connected with murder and sudden death. At last he dismissed his guests—without their servants, whom he had sent away beforehand, and had them driven or borne away in carriages or litters by complete strangers, which only served to intensify their fears.

"Just as each guest had reached his home at last and begun to recover from his fright, messengers from the Emperor were announced. 'Now,' thought everyone again, 'my last hour has sounded.' Instead of which there entered first a servant bearing a silver column, a second with one of the vessels displayed at the feast, of great value and finest workmanship, and finally the boy who had figured as genius, washed clean of paint and neatly dressed. Thus they received presents in compensation for the fear of death in which they had passed the whole night." To be sure, Domitian ordered the execution of several of the chief men among them at the same time.

A jest which amused the guests still less was prompted by the privileged caprice of the Emperor Heliogabalus. The guests were senators, the host Heliogabalus; the difference between them was great, for the senators represented the conservatives, the party which had formerly held power, while the victorious democratic principle was embodied in the person of the Emperor. Right in the midst of the glittering feast he let wild beasts be driven in, to the consternation of his guests. " What are you afraid of ? " simpered the Emperor, from his seat of safety. He burst into a loud laugh. "I had all their teeth broken off first." Caligula loved to gloat over the divided feelings which, as a despot, he could evoke in those around him. He once invited to one of his great bouts of gluttony and drinking a knight—Pastor, whose son he had put to death that very day. " What faces these fellows make, when you take their wives away from table in the middle of a merry party and ravish them," thought Caligula, with whom " no lady was safe ". " It was his custom to invite ladies with their husbands to table. There, reclining at full length, he would take stock of them as they passed, carefully and deliberately, like a slave-dealer, and even go so far as to lift their chins for them, if any one lowered her head in confusion. Later, when the mood took him, he would leave the table, send for the one who had appealed to him most, and, upon his return shortly after with the traces of his debauch upon him for all to see, would praise or blame her in front of everybody, expatiating upon each of her physical merits or demerits and her behaviour in his arms." At times he would call across to a husband, lying at his wife's side, " Don't you dare to touch *my* wife ! "

At the feasts which the Emperor gave the people in the circus the eating and drinking often lasted a whole week, accompanied among other things by entertainments of the coarsest kind. The banquet gradually degenerated into a spectacle of revolting gluttony. Materialism had wiped out all interest in congenial companionship enlivened by intellectual conversation. Even the excellent cooking no longer offered any great attraction ; what mattered was the sensational kind and quantity of the dishes. Dishes strewn with precious stones and delicacies which were difficult to obtain—a whole fleet or a great body of troops having sometimes had to be commissioned to secure them—found favour with the great. Wealth clamoured to be spent. Men wanted to be known for extravagance, to be leaders of society, *princeps* among the gluttons. Vitellius, an Emperor of the post-Claudian era, was the prize specimen of materialist-capitalistic gluttony. " As a rule he would invite himself to dinner on one and the same day to several houses, and the smallest sum which such a meal cost each host was four hundred thousand sesterces (£4,260)."

Vitellius lived the life of a beast. He applied his energies to diverting food from its natural purpose of sustaining the body to wrecking it. Suetonius, his biographer, said of him : " The most talked about event was the supper which his brother gave in honour of his arrival in Rome, at which two thousand of the rarest kinds of fish and seven thousand of the costliest birds were served. But he himself even surpassed this." Vitellius had an enormous silver dish designed, to provide for which " a special oven had to be built in the open ". He called this giant glutton's dish " Minerva's shield "—Minerva being the tutelary goddess of Rome. What would Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, have said if she had seen the use to which her dish was put ? " In this dish sea-bream liver, pheasants' and peacocks' brains, flamingoes' tongues, soft roe of lamprey, to procure which fleets had scoured the seas from Parthia (Khorasan, the land of the sun) to the straits of Spain (Gibraltar) were served up together as a ragout."

Vitellius, whose voracious appetite never faltered, is next shown standing before a sacrifice—a sacred ceremony—" snatching pieces of sacrificial meat from the altars and bits of the sacrificial cake from the very fire " and bolting them, or breaking his journey at country inns to devour in haste smoking vegetables and even the remains of dishes which had been prepared the day before. In the seven months of his reign the Emperor Vitellius squandered on food six million one hundred and eighty thousand pounds. No freedman's gluttony ever attained to such portentous dimensions; such a scale was reserved for the Emperor.

Heliogabalus, one of the last of the imperial decadents—Emperor from A.D. 218 to 222—was not content with food wastage. He combined " with his feast a lottery, whereby every guest received ten camels or ostriches or ten pounds of gold, and showered such a quantity of the rarest and costliest flowers over his guests that some of them were actually suffocated ". Tiberius, Augustus' successor, who alone did not fall a prey to the mad folly of the age, was no glutton. In consequence, his guests grumbled about him at one of his banquets. He had only half a boar served. This displeased them, and they took no pains to conceal their thoughts. " Half a boar tastes just as well as a whole one," said Tiberius to his gluttons.

The rich families of the Claudian era affected the imperial fashion of magnificence in the entertainment of their guests. On such occasions these purse-proud people exhibited their best slaves, recruited from every country under the sun—black, brown, white ; young Spaniards and Greek boys did duty as pages, and the guests dried their hands in their long hair. Boys from Alexandria, famous for their ready wit, delighted the revellers, naked children disported themselves and the women delighted in their artless movements and play. Such banquets could scarcely be expected to escape the notice of the satirist. Vitellius' gluttony was too big a target for the satirist to waste his shafts upon. But the keenness of the freedmen to emulate and even surpass the Emperor in this respect appealed to the satirical poets, who turned a fine irony on the "devil for gluttony", whose appetite for money had been sated.

Petronius Arbiter tells the following story of an upstart. Trimalchio, the "hero", is a freedman. When he was yet a slave, his master must have thrown to him what the herd of slaves was usually fed on, that is, pap, turnips, pumpkins, cabbage, onions, and for seasoning, garlic. Now, however, grown extremely rich, Trimalchio spends part of his wealth in the most luxurious and ostentatious manner on a banquet[1] . . . The plates and dishes are of silver; to stimulate the wonder and admiration of his guests, the price of each piece is engraved on it . . . A slave is instructed to make a clumsy movement and let a silver dish fall, to give his master the opportunity of ordering it to be swept out with the dust. Trimalchio, the master and host, the freedman, is borne into the banqueting-hall, reposing upon a heap of tiny cushions, and given the place of honour, although he is the host. He wears a scarlet cloak; round his neck is a linen cloth with a broad stripe and tassels; there are rings on his fingers; an armlet of gold and ivory bracelets encircles his arms. An ass of Corinthian bronze laden with panniers containing olives for *hors d'œuvre*; fattened dormice garnished with honey and poppy-seed; sausages on a silver gridiron, all stand in readiness . . .

Now, to the strains of music, all sorts of things are introduced to add variety to the entertainment; a basket is brought in, in which is a wooden hen with her wings spread round her as though she were hatching; slaves rummage her nest and produce pea-hen's eggs, which they distribute among the guests. The guests break open the eggs with silver spoons, each of which weighs at least half-a-pound.

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[1] [Cf. *Petronius: The Satyricon*, part ii (Routledge, *Broadway Translations*).]

The eggs are composed of a rich paste, and upon being opened are each found to contain a beautifully prepared ortolan—a highly-prized delicacy—in yolk of egg. . . . Enter next two Ethiopians carrying skins, who pour wine over the hands of the guests, for nothing so common as water is served here. . . . The table wine is the hundred-year-old Opimian Falernian.

—"Alas, alas, life is so short ! The wine will outlive us !"—

A slave produces a silver skeleton with ingeniously adjusted flexible joints ; it is thrown about the table and made to assume a variety of attitudes . . . The company bewail the shortness of life—and therefore they drink . . . Now comes a big tray, with the twelve signs of the Zodiac arranged in a circle, and over each sign the master artist has placed a dainty appropriate to the subject . . . Ever and again, music heralds the arrival of a fresh course. A flat dish is brought in. Slaves remove the cover, revealing a hotchpotch of sucking-pig and other meats ; a hare with wings, to resemble Pegasus. In the corners of the dish are four fauns with vessels from which a sharp sauce pours out over the fish, which swim as in a pond . . . Music and jugglers . . . Witty repartee. Then there is a din outside. Enter huntsmen with spears. Spartan hounds race round the table. A wild boar of the very largest proportions, with two little baskets woven of palm-leaves hanging from its tusks, is brought in on a charger ; in one basket are black dates, in the other white ones from Thebes. The boar has a cap on its head, and hanging to its dugs are a number of little pastry pigs, for dessert. A huge fellow in hunting costume falls upon it with a stout hunting-knife and shears it open. In a trice the hall is fall of flying fieldfares, which have been inside the animal.

"Why did the boar come in wearing a cap ?"

The slave explains : " This boar, as it was about to be eaten yesterday, was set free by the guests, and thus reappears at table to-day as a freedman." A comely slave, wearing a garland of vine-leaves and ivy, goes the round handing grapes from a small basket and singing his master's compositions. His master immediately gives freedom to the slave, who snatches the cap from the boar's head and puts it on his own . . . Another boar, of enormous size, is set on the table ; the cook disembowels it. To the general amusement, a pile of all sorts of sausages pours out. The entire household begins to clap its hands in admiration. A silver crown is forthwith placed upon the head of the cook ; he is also rewarded with a goblet and basin of Corinthian bronze . . .

The fun is at its height.

Trimalchio, who by now is somewhat the worse for liquor, inquires in surprise : " Why does nobody ask that my Fortunata may dance a *cordax* ? . . . " Enter conjurers, jugglers . . . And so the feast goes on. Thus does Petronius ridicule his age.

Another satirist tells the following authentic story: A colossus of an Adriatic turbot was caught by a fisherman off Ancona. As the fish was of rare size, it was set apart as an offering to the pontiff—the Emperor.[1] In any case, who would have dared to sell this fish, considering that even on the coasts there was no lack of common informers ? The hidden watchers would not have hesitated to lay information against the fisherman ; they would have boldly declared that the fish had escaped from the Emperor's ponds, where it had attained its girth, and that the fugitive would have to return to its former master. Incidentally, every rare or beautiful creature of the sea was the Emperor's treasure trove. The fisherman hastened to the Emperor, who was in residence at his palace at Castel Gandolfo in the

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[1] [Domitian.]

Alban hills. A crowd of sightseers gathered in front of the palace. The senators pushed their way to the front to see what was the matter, but the door was shut in their faces. With the utmost humility, the fisherman handed over his fish. " Dread lord, accept that which is far too large for a commoner's hearth. Eat this fish, which has been preserved for your time ; it begged of its own accord to be taken in the net." Imperial arrogance swelled at the subject's words. " There is nothing which this godlike power will not believe of itself when it is flattered."

But now the real comedy of errors began. No dish was large enough to hold the huge fish. The Emperor summoned the senators, whom he ordinarily hated and despised, and sought their counsel. They were pale with fright, for such exalted friendship was ever fraught with peril. The courier dashed off to Rome with all speed to the *præfectus urbi*, the first official of the city, with the cry : " Quick, make haste ! " The prefect scrambled into his purple robes of state, and scurried off to Alba to the imperial palace. With him was the kindly, nodding Senator Crispinus, an octogenarian, " who would have done better had he given the lord of the seas, dominions, and peoples worthier counsel at that time of raging pestilence and desolation, and reprimanded the Emperor's bloodthirstiness " ; but he, too, did not dare to stem the tide and sacrifice his life for the truth. There also went Acilius, of the same age, and with him his son, the lion-fighter, friend and envied of the Emperor ; Rubrius, who was still in fear of punishment for his seduction of Julia ; the fat-paunched Montanus ; Crispinus, who from early morning on anointed himself to such an extent that " he exuded in one day more ointment than two embalmed mummies " ; Pompeius, the murderous, who only needed the faintest whisper of encouragement to cut a man's throat ; Fuseus, the prefect of the imperial bodyguard ; Veiento, a senator ; Catullus, the man of blood—a choice and typical band.

Nobody wondered any longer at the fish, so profound was the impression made by Catullus' oration. In his feigned raptures he had carried them all with him.—" The fish ! A sign of a great and signal triumph ! Some king or other will be your prisoner, or Arviragus, the King of the Britons, who so far has refused to submit, will fall from his war chariot. Look ! The monster is from foreign parts : do you not see the erect spikes on its back ? "

" Foreign ? " retorted Fabricius[1]—who, with any encouragement, would have given its year of birth and exact origin—and asked Catullus, " What do you advise ?—Just cut it to pieces ? "

Montanus interrupted him with " Spare it the disgrace ! Let a deep vessel be prepared with thin walls which shall tightly hold the massive form. But a worthy successor to Prometheus must be found, to fashion such a dish. Hasten, hasten, I say ! Let clay and the potter's wheel be made ready. Henceforth, great Cæsar, potters must follow you into camp ! " This speech gained the day. Thus ended the high debate. They rose, and the venerable counsellors whom the august monarch had summoned in hot haste to his palace at Alba " as if news of an insurrection in the provinces or the most ominous tidings had come from far-off parts," were dismissed. However, such was the state of affairs under the rule of the Cæsars. On account of a fish, an alarm was sent out to the men who were responsible for the administration of the State. The sycophant interpreted the fish as a sign. The Emperor lent his ear to this, for in that age even the mightiest would creep in superstitious dread behind an omen and become a slave to his own imaginings. In uneasy hours the services of those who at other times were the objects and victims of imperial caprice and bloodthirstiness were thankfully accepted by a Cæsar. In the end, State and government meant only the person of the Emperor.

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[1] [Veiento—*Trs.*]

How, for example, did Caligula govern?

He had just seen that his Cæsonia was awakening from sleep, and so, too, impatient to examine the charges which had been laid before him, he condemned to death, with one sentence, "some forty men who had been severally accused of different offences." "Just see," he said to Cæsonia, "how much work I've got through while you were taking a nap!" "A soldier, who was a master executioner, had to display his art during the Emperor's hours of ease and breakfasting." Satisfaction of his personal inclinations was the Emperor's idea of government. Even though there were Emperors who ordered things for the good of Rome, they still remained egoists to whom nothing was sacred but their own selves. One alone resisted the temptations of despotic rule—the Emperor Tiberius, who accepted the office of *princeps* against his will.

All Rome was of imperialistic mind. The spirit of the age was masterful and licentious. Not only the men, but the women had cast off all restraint and lived according to the desire of the moment. Time was when Rome's women had been model wives and mothers. They had been that for five hundred years, for as long as the men retained their virtue and until the evil influences of money and power invaded Rome. The family law of ancient Rome with the absolute authority which it gave the head of the family over his wife had in the course of the centuries grown looser and ever looser. Woman's emancipation in the family was now recognized by the law defining her proprietary rights in her dowry.

From her twelfth year onwards a woman was marriageable; and when she married at this age she was transferred as it were " to a new world " where, if her husband held a good position, she found sufficient in her social life to awaken ambition and the desire to please. As mistress of the house she could do as she pleased with the slaves, both male or female. The theatre, which was much frequented in the imperial age, the circus, with its monstrosities, the very sights and sounds of everyday life in the streets, the banquets with their invariable appeal to the senses, transported the women into an atmosphere of irresponsibility. If the poets of the time said " It were easier to dry up the sea and pluck the stars from the sky than to prevent our women from sinning ", and " virtue in women is not to be found in Rome ", the blame for this must be laid upon the men, who had evoked this spirit of the age and desired a life of licence for themselves and for the women. Men found married life burdensome, as a rule, and escaped from it by means of divorce or adultery ; neither presented any great difficulty.

Had they not, before their very eyes, the example set by the first citizen of Rome, the *princeps*, the Emperor ? Marriage for the majority of women in the Cæsarean age was only a screen behind which they could follow their own devices undisturbed. The poet Ovid described in his own audacious, attractive manner the easiest way of seducing a woman ; no woman's apartment was complete without his *Songs of Love*, every woman of society knew them and could probably, if consulted, have added material to his " Art of Love." He himself had been divorced twice and married three times. Of his daughter he said, " Twice in her susceptible youth she made me a grandfather, but not through the medium of a husband." Was it only a vicious propensity, or was it greed of gold, which (in A.D. 19) led " Vestilia, a lady of prætorian family, to register herself with the police as a prostitute ? " In Rome, the metropolis, where the houses, gardens, shops, dazzling jewels, fine cloths, and ever new fashions from foreign countries called to the wayfarer " Take me with you ! ", the human soul was far too weak to resist. The value which woman set upon herself as a woman applied in most cases to her body ; her vanity, coquetry, and love of display were pushed to inordinate lengths. What was the use of life, if she could not adorn herself for the captivation of man ?

The gratification of such tastes for self-adornment and luxury required, however, a great deal of money. But it was now a fundamental principle in Rome that money meant everything, that money was the only standard of value for human life—or, indeed, for human love, as love went then. In a house in Pompeii, a town much frequented by wealthy Romans for their revels, is a picture of a pair of scales, one of which contains coin and the other a phallus. The scales are evenly balanced.

Following the example set by their husbands, the women grew mercenary. The wives of governors in the provinces were as greedy of gain as their husbands, and took advantage of their husbands' absence on journeys to the cities or on court-days " to go prowling for money, with curved claws, like Celaeno, the repulsive harpy ". Everything in Rome was so dear ! " Dear, the humblest lodging ; dear, to keep a slave ; dear, the simplest meal." Much money was therefore needful in order to be able to live well. The light of Rome, the ever-radiant, attracted all the butterflies and moths to its flame. To shine with the rest in the great radiance, to outshine them, if possible, that was the watchword. The burning light, however, drained the life-blood of many, and women positively threw their lives away. Eros' flame set them alight and consumed them. Love no longer played its rightful part in their lives. Gaiety and colour gave a stimulus to sexual indulgence, which in its turn became a means of acquiring wealth.

To be able to afford luxury and dazzle the others, to be one of the first, to give herself the airs of an empress, was woman's ambition in Rome. Nor was the beautiful woman content with being beautiful. "She demanded of her husband flocks of Canusian sheep with their shining, white wool—and shepherds to tend them ; vines must grow in her gardens, stretching from elm to elm laden with grapes of Falernian wine—how her veins glowed at the thought ! —which ignites at the approach of flame. She must have pages, workshops with slaves to bring in money. In wishing, her greed grows ; she beseeches her husband to add their neighbour's house to their own, clamours for crystal vessels, Chinese porcelain, and the diamonds of a king's daughter." She wished to attract the men by a magnificent display.

Man had become woman's model. She saw his freedom from restraint and was loth to be left behind in her narrow sphere. She desired to imitate the habits and behaviour which the new age had taught man. She wished to amass riches, no matter how, like a man, so as to be able to spend like a man. It pleased women to effect a masculine swagger. "High and low, their desires are now the same." Admittedly, more than a few women lived in straitened circumstances ; but if one of them went to the theatre or circus, no matter whether on foot or in a litter borne by Syrian slaves, "she borrowed liveried servants, women companions, a waiting-woman, with a little blond errand-girl, clothes, litter, and purple cushions." She acted a part to herself, as it were, and was her own illusionist.

The Emperor had all the power, and could wield it as he pleased. His arrogance even outran his power, and he made the distance between himself and his subjects as great and as marked as possible. A wife wanted to dominate her husband : she would not allow him to dispose of his own property. The Emperors acted in a very similar way towards their subjects. She "ordered affection" : the Emperor ordered love for Cæsar.

"Crucify that slave!"—the wife orders her husband.

"Why? What has he done?"

"Ass! Is a slave a human being, forsooth? Done—he hasn't done anything! But I want it, demand it, insist upon it! For reason, my will is enough!"—("*Sic volo, sic jubeo*!")

Woman was cruel in a cruel age. "When the neighbour's dog barked in the night and waked the *domina* from her sleep, the cruel tyrant dispatched slaves to thrash the neighbour together with his dogs." The maidservant who did not fall in with her mistress' mood of the moment was stabbed in the arm with pins which her mistress snatched from her dress, or scourged on her naked back and breast. The nearer a noblewoman's social position brought her to the imperial house, the more striking was her imitation of court usage. Egoism ruled supreme. "Poor women must brave the dangers of childbirth, and nourish children at their breast ; but those who lie in golden beds send for someone who, for money, removes the seed and murders a human being before it is born!"

The "imperialistic" woman desired to be free—free as the men whom she saw continually about her. Her cry was "Do as man does!" Women even appeared in court with indictments and speeches for the defence which they had themselves composed. In the circus they appeared as gladiators. In the stadium they ran races in naked groups. Like men, they caroused through the nights, and, like men in helmet and plume, sword-belt and greaves, they wanted to ride at the head of armies and command them. They busied themselves with literature, philosophy, and mathematics. Knowledge was power, they told themselves. Women had become untrue to their womanhood.

The shadow of imperial might overlay all minds, reducing mankind to insignificance.

IV

EMPRESS

Messalina was the wife of the Emperor coming third in order of succession to Augustus, who died in the year A.D. 14. In the year 41 Messalina's husband, Tiberius Claudius Drusus Cæsar, known as the Emperor Claudius, came to the throne. In the intervening years the office of *princeps* had been held by Tiberius Nero Cæsar, called Tiberius, and Caius Cæsar Caligula, called Caligula. The rule of Tiberius lasted from A.D. 14 to 37, and that of Caligula from 37 to 41.

Augustus, whose full name was Caius Julius Octavianus Augustus, forced his way into the highest position in Rome in the year 31 B.C., and remained Emperor until his death.

Claudius, who was born on 1st August in the year 10 B.C., and was thus fifty years old in A.D. 40, married Messalina when she was a little over sixteen. This was before he became Emperor and before there was any idea that he would do so.

In the rather more than thirty years which had elapsed between the foundation of the monarchy by Augustus and the time when Claudius became its representative and Messalina occupied the imperial residence by his side, continual and bitter struggles had taken place for the possession of supremacy.

It was no easy matter for Augustus to resist the women who either knew they were in a position of authority or wished to create that impression. He had to endeavour to keep on good terms with each and all, for their ambitious efforts to attain influence and power might easily have led to the formation of cliques and of personal parties enjoying prestige in the outside world. Augustus was, however, above all things bound to secure the loyalty of the general public, for, as the monarchic representative of the people, and especially of the popular party as opposed to a conservative party which, though somewhat declining in power, was still strong in traditional ascendency, he was an outsider whose whole position was exceptional and, indeed, hitherto unprecedented. This was the first time that the rival political leaders in Rome had united to place the reins of government, by common consent, in the hands of a man invested with absolute powers.

Had personal advocacy of the interests of one or another member of the imperial house spread amongst the public, the political equilibrium might easily have been disturbed and rifts developed in the fabric of the State.

Augustus had caused large numbers of his chief political adversaries to be murdered before he assumed control. This still rankled with their dependents and their unknown partisans, and a puff of wind might have fanned the idea of vengeance into flame and ended Augustus' life and office alike, had he not been wise and calculating enough always to test the ground on which he stood before consolidating his position.

Where the women of the imperial house were concerned Augustus had never been able to speak freely; he had always taken care to avoid emphasizing his points unduly and he carefully weighed his words.

When he had any important communication to make to his wife Livia, he always appeared with a tablet bearing his intelligence, "in order that neither too much nor too little be said, as might occur were this preparation omitted."

Caligula, the Empress Livia's grandson, who until her death lived and was brought up in her house, once in his youth described his grandmother as " Odysseus in woman's clothing ".

Livia was one of those clever women who are ready to overlook their husbands' weaknesses in order to bind them the more strongly to themselves : ambitious in character, she wished to stand as the first woman in the world at the side of the first man in the world ; it was her inflexible determination to settle the question of the succession in favour of her own house.

When asked how she had acquired such influence over her husband she replied : " By always keeping my own requirements within the bounds of moderation and propriety ; gladly doing his will in every way ; never seeking to meddle in his affairs ; and never being jealous of his love intrigues, or even appearing to notice them."

Livia's conduct and perspicacity were not least among the factors which strengthened Augustus' position as a sovereign ruler. His long reign was due more to his wife than to himself, for behind the scenes the Empress was all-powerful. Even Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, in her critical hour besought Livia's intercession for a light sentence with Augustus.

Livia often urged Augustus to leniency as a means of finding favour with the people. When the imperial couple, in the course of a walk, encounterered some naked men, whom Augustus wished to sentence to death for transgressing the laws of decency, Livia dissuaded him from such severity. " After all," she said to Augustus, " to the eyes of a modest woman it is only like seeing a statue." Even Livia's repeated attempts to mitigate the penalties imposed by Augustus were merely the outcome of forethought in a calculating woman. The mediocre intelligence of Augustus was guided by the astute woman.

It was Livia who continually had to remind her husband, the Emperor, that he was a man of the people. Games on a vast scale and popular banquets were not enough to keep the masses perpetually well disposed towards the absolute monarch ; being a woman, she took account of the little things of life and gave her consort many a hint for maintaining his popularity. She made a point, for instance, of always attending the games arranged for the people, and of assembling the entire family for the occasion.

When fires broke out, Livia often hastened to the spot and " spurred people and soldiers on to effective aid ". The populace should realize the interest of the ruling house in their concerns.

Livia was subtle and calculating ; when she used her influence for the public benefit the motive lay in her own sphere of interests and in that of the family.

Although Livia might well have been content as Empress—she was flattered with the title " Illustrious Julia Augusta ", the highest authorities in the Empire competed for the privilege of loading her with honours, and the Senate proposed for her designation " Foster-mother " or " Mother of her Country "—she was not happy.

It seemed impossible to settle the questions of succession and inheritance. Of what use to the ambitious Empress was the country, which in adulation called her " Mother " ? Could she have heard the word " mother " uttered from a loving heart by her son Tiberius her plans of aggrandisement would have been better served.

Livia and Augustus were schemers ; they were heartless. But when in human life the head alone does the reckoning, the result is amiss. In the autocratic state, which resembles a machine, logic prevails ; but there is another law for the growth of human life into an organic whole.

Julia, the daughter of Augustus' marriage to Scribonia—whom he divorced—was the pawn for which the validity of the imperial couple's calculations was to be verified.

Augustus married the fourteen-year old girl to Marcellus, the son of his sister Octavia, hoping that through this union the sacred Julian blood—Augustus was the great-grandson of Julius Cæsar, who traced his descent from the goddess Venus—would continue to rule over Rome.

Augustus had already adopted into his family Marcellus, of the Julian line, made him his son-in-law and appointed him his successor.

Livia looked askance at this union ; she was already depressed by the fact that she herself had no children by her marriage with Augustus. Her son, Nero Claudius Drusus, who came into the world three months after her marriage to Augustus, had died on a campaign in Germany in the year 9 B.C. before he was thirty.

Livia's son, whom she had brought with her into marriage, was called Tiberius (born on 16th November, in the year 41 B.C.). It can easily be imagined how she longed to see the sovereign power vested some day in a child of hers. Augustus adopted Tiberius, it is true, but there was no question of the latter ever succeding him. The " sacred " blood did not flow in Tiberius' veins, as it did in Julia's. His father was of Claudian ancestry—Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero, who, like Augustus' wife Livia, was a descendant of the ancient Sabine line of the Claudians. Julia had barely reached the age of sixteen when her husband, Marcellus, died. It was whispered in Rome that Julia was to blame for his death " because he had been given preference over her own son ".

Octavia, mother of the departed Marcellus, now entered the lists as Livia's open enemy. Again, however, Augustus was ready and equal to the occasion. Although he had virtually banished from Rome the man who was always ready to stand by him, the statesmanlike Agrippa, his commander-in-chief and minister, in order to have his young son-in-law Marcellus at his side, yet immediately after the latter's death he turned once more to the trusty Agrippa. Incidentally, Agrippa was married to Marcella, the daughter of Augustus' sister Octavia.

Augustus summoned Agrippa back to Rome, and authoritatively, as became an Emperor, convinced him of the necessity of marrying Julia, thus following the advice of his friend Maecenas, who had said to him: "You have made the man so great that he must either become your son-in-law or fall." That argument had appealed to Augustus, for he wanted to retain the sovereign power. Accordingly, Agrippa received the imperial order to divorce his wife Marcella and marry Julia.

Octavia, Marcella's mother, was quite agreeable; for she already had an inkling of Livia's idea of arranging a marriage some day between her son Tiberius, who had just attained his majority, and Julia, thereby ensuring the succession of the Claudian line. Octavia sacrificed her daughter for the sake of dynastic interests.

Livia still concealed her hand, for she did not want to displease Augustus, and she felt that the time for action was not yet ripe. Augustus carried out his scheme of uniting the couple Julia and Agrippa. Julia, aged seventeen, married the man of forty-one; for great was her ambition some day to be the wife of the first man in the Empire.

Calculation upon calculation. The figures in the sum were human hearts. In these campaigns Augustus conducted himself like a marshal. But so far he was quite unaware of the plans his wife Livia was secretly nursing, in which she intended that her son Tiberius should play an involuntary part. Augustus was highly delighted at the birth to Agrippa and Julia of three princes, Caius, Lucius, and Agrippa Postumus, and of two princesses, Agrippina and Julia the Younger ; but Livia's ambition to see her son the Claudian Tiberius some day ascend the throne only burned the more fiercely.

Thus began the Julian–Claudian family feud, the consequences of which fell upon Rome and the world. Henceforward the Empress Livia lived in a state of greater hostility towards her husband than he ever guessed.

While Julia was taking every advantage of her position as a married woman to pursue amorous adventure and abandon herself unrestrainedly to debauch in the wildest and most profligate company, Livia continued to spin the web of her domestic policy in ever-widening circles. She was aware of Julia's degenerate mode of life, but was shrewd enough not to importune her husband Augustus at this stage, since that would have meant a premature destruction of her web by her own hands. She was well aware how highly Augustus prized his daughter and how ready he was to overlook her lawless follies.

This very irresponsibility of Julia's may have obliged her father Augustus to be so lenient. Caligula, so proud of his divine Julian descent, refused to hear anything to the good of his grandfather-commoner Agrippa, and "reckoned it to the greater glory of his mother Agrippina, the daughter of Julia, that she owed her existence to Augustus' incestuous relations with his daughter Julia".

Was this the reason why the poet Ovid, who was on intimate terms with the imperial family, had to go into exile—because he had been an involuntary eye-witness of the commerce between father and daughter ?

Livia knew much, knew all, and kept silence ; but her silence was merely a mask, behind which she laid her plans in readiness for attack.

Julia, surrounded by young men of ancient, decadent nobility, deemed herself the first woman in

Rome. But was not Livia this woman ? Disguised as bickerings, the battle for supremacy went on.

And Scribonia, too, Augustus' first wife, Julia's mother, whom the Emperor had cast off, was still alive : was she not the ancestress of the Julian dynasty, in spite of her divorce ? True, she held aloof from the family quarrel ; but she was decidedly the enemy of the Claudian Livia, her rival and successor, and of all who had Claudian blood in their veins—inevitably so.

Augustus, who was sensitive to public opinion, effected a reconciliation with Scribonia, since she occupied a leading place in the popular esteem. Julia saw much of her mother. In their talks at home the sorely-tried woman, whom fate had treated so unkindly, could unburden her heart to her daughter ; her only hope, her only interest in life, was centred in the thought that " through the children of her daughter Julia her family would finally gain the day over Livia " and the Claudians.

Julia thus had many means of support which she imagined would assure her an impregnable position in spite of all her rashness. Livia, however, kept a watchful eye upon Julia. She posted her spies and soon had a record of Julia's sins ready, but she kept it to herself and bided her time.

The imperial couple continued to live side by side like enemies who have to be friends in outward profession.

There could be no question of mutual affinity in a married life of this kind, and the concern of the Emperor and the Empress, the " father and mother of their country ", for the welfare of their " children " was equally negligible. Livia had to think of herself. Scribonia, Octavia, and Julia swore increased enmity against the Claudian Livia and her son Tiberius, and devised plans for the forcible removal of Tiberius at least, the intruder in the ancient and noble Julian house, from the imperial circle.

The feeble Augustus lent the Julians a ready ear; for was he not himself a Julian? They persuaded him to go to the length of adopting his grandsons—Julia's sons Lucius and Caius—and "declaring them his successors".

Livia's prospects of gaining the upper hand in the family quarrel grew more and more remote. The death of her son Drusus had frustrated her cherished plan of setting a Claudian upon the throne. For, in emulation of the tactics of her husband Augustus, she had arranged a marriage between Drusus and Antonia, daughter of the Emperor's sister Octavia. Now all her hopes were concentrated upon Tiberius, who, however, evinced little taste for the machinations and intrigues of the imperial house. From his earliest youth he had been of a contemplative disposition, retiring much into himself; the vexatious family bickerings had taught him reticence: he was burdened with memories of his mother's separation from his father, the latter's early death, and the absence of affection displayed by his stepfather Augustus and not infrequently his mother Livia in their treatment of him; he felt he had no part in the imperial scheme in Rome or in the imperial family. This again added to the difficulties surrounding the execution of his mother Livia's plans.

And so the miniature war, waged chiefly by the women, continued to rage in the imperial family. Nor was the end by any means in sight yet.

In Rome, however, people had eyes only for outward appearances. Everything seemed to be working in perfect harmony. Augustus and Livia behaved like turtle-doves; Tiberius worked unremittingly for his imperial stepfather as statesman and marshal of his armies in the field; Julia's eyes shone with happiness.

People flocked to the circus games in search of excitement, feasted their senses on the obscenities of the burlesque and dances at the theatre, daily beheld new marble palaces in course of erection, enjoyed themselves in the public life of the city with its infinite variety of amusements, diced, drank, and were in the best possible tempers. Rome saw and heard nothing of the Julian–Claudian family war. The minority, who had gained some slight knowledge of it, held their peace and waited to see if they could not some day turn their information to account.

Rome wasted its strength in the pursuit of money and golden pleasures ; the members of the imperial family exhausted theirs in the war of attrition for power.

Julia, with whom no man was safe, once made advances to the luckless Tiberius, despite her Julian blood. In disgust, Tiberius spurned this vain and sensuous beauty, whom no man had hitherto been able to resist. Henceforth fierce hatred dogged his footsteps ; Julia was furious at the conduct of the Claudian Tiberius, her social inferior.

Then Agrippa died. Once more Julia was a free woman. Now Livia's hour had struck. Now for the marriage of Tiberius and Julia ! This was what she had all along intended and would now urge upon Augustus, whose mind was greatly exercised by the question of succession.

Certainly Julia must remain connected with the imperial house. Augustus' mind was quite clear upon this point. No subject, he thought, would lightly venture to take any liberties with the sacred Julian blood ! Prompt action was essential—that was Augustus' inexorable resolve. How easily might he himself lose his throne, if no provision for a successor were made and the imperial dais became, so to speak, vacant ! Yet he could not bring himself to accept Tiberius.

The facts that Tiberius was decidedly averse from Julia and that Julia hated him, that Tiberius was happily married, that both women, Tiberius' wife and

Julia, were pregnant at the time, did not deter Livia from bringing the full flood of her eloquence to bear upon her husband Augustus, to win him over to her plan ; for had she not once meted out to herself the same treatment which she now demanded for others ? Ambition and the thirst for power had alienated Livia from life, and so she acted as though life had cast her adrift. But she had gained her object, and become Empress ; now she intended her own son to become Emperor in the same way.

The faint-hearted Augustus was little more than a tool in the hands of his wife Livia. He forthwith ordered Tiberius to obtain a divorce and marry Julia. What was to be the upshot of this game of dice ? Augustus regarded his throw as one of the luckiest, considering the circumstances, that he had ever made. Livia had quite forgotten Julia's gay life. The incompatible pair, Tiberius and Julia, were united as man and wife by imperial command. The bargain in human lives was successfully concluded. The spirit of the age recognized force alone.

In the interests of the state Tiberius tried to live in harmony with Julia, putting his own feelings completely in the background ; he grieved in silence and worked dutifully for the republic.

Julia troubled little about the marriage bond ; what was she, after all, but a means to her father's political ends ? As the wife of Tiberius she made no change in her mode of life. On the contrary, if anything it increased in laxity since she had come into closer contact with that unfailing advocate, her father, Augustus. With the most shameless effrontery Julia now swept through Rome in company of her many paramours.

Sempronius Gracchus, a young man of ancient patrician family, had already in Agrippa's time treated Julia as his regular mistress. He considered the change of husbands no reason for any alteration in his previous relations with Julia. Julia abandoned herself to the most reckless love adventures with him and was constantly planning new ones.

Moreover, Julia was quite amenable to being used by her lovers against her father. Her boundless ambition to be supreme in the state, as well as in profligacy, led her to allow " her adulterous relations with the young sprigs of the nobility to be partly a means and a cloak to the concoction of treasonable plots " against her father.

Tiberius was not the man Julia wanted, at whose side she desired some day to stand as Empress ; she cared only for irresponsible, licentious, sybaritic men, and those of the highest and most ancient nobility. Consequently, it was an easy matter for Sempronius Gracchus to keep Julia during her married life with Tiberius close to his side and draw her into his circle of friends. Thus the spiritual gulf between husband and wife grew ever wider. This did not cause Augustus and Livia overmuch concern. In their eyes the officially recognized union was sufficient guarantee for the future.

Tiberius, whose complaints to Augustus about Julia fell upon deaf ears, became ever more solitary. When at last he felt he could bear the burden no longer and as a self-respecting individual could not live as a husband with a woman like Julia for wife ; when he realized that all representations on the subject to Augustus and Livia were fruitless, he suddenly left Rome. With his departure the old phantom returned to haunt the Empress and, still more, the Emperor. " Tiberius gone : who will succeed ? Shall I remain Emperor ? Who will overthrow me ? " Augustus feared for his power. In vain Livia tried every device to recall her son from the island of Rhodes, whither he had retired to apply himself to study in solitude.

The calculations of the imperial couple were at fault.

The edifice wrought by imperial arrogance had collapsed as the result of a decision which life had matured.

What could be more welcome to Julia, separated from her husband, than to continue her life of dissipation with her kindred spirit, the foolhardy young Sempronius Gracchus—with the prospect, moreover, of some day playing Empress and Emperor with her favourite ? " Take advantage of the position," was now Julia's watchword. Her father was furious with Tiberius, who at one stroke had abandoned all his work for the government. His mother was indignant with her son, who had suddenly frustrated all her imperialistic calculations. There remained Julia, whose favour the imperial couple were now obliged to court.

Julia, aided and abetted by Sempronius, concocted all manner of plans to damage the absent Tiberius and to detract from his reputation ; they were determined to incite public feeling against him.

Sempronius dictated to Julia spiteful letters to her father, in which she continually complained about Tiberius ; she knew that Augustus showed these letters to his wife. Julia defied the latter by the display of all manner of excesses ; she longed to show the detested Claudian Livia, mother of the man who had once scorned her advances, by her extravagant conduct, that she could do as she pleased. Moreover, Julia, who had reached the age of thirty-eight, had already noticed more than one grey strand in her black hair. Her mirror reflected wrinkles at the temples, and this reminded her of the need for seizing every opportunity, lost during her marriage with Tiberius, for dissipation before the coming of old age.

Amid this frenzied pursuit of enjoyment Julia set herself to render Tiberius permanently harmless by inflaming the minds of her young sons against him. Julia thought herself securely surrounded by the flames of wrath against Tiberius which she had ignited and tended in the imperial circle.

The day could not be far off, she thought, when she would take Livia's place as Empress with a husband of her own choice at her side. Till then, however, Julia put on her "glass dress", so called because it was transparent, and flew to the light, which attracts moths . . . Now at last Livia had collected all her material. Julia's assurance collapsed beneath the weight of the public indictment.

Scribonia, Julia's mother, voluntarily accompanied her daughter to the desolate rock-girt island to which Julia had been banished by State decree. One day, however, a certain Audasius, and then Epicadus, an Illyrian resident in Rome, made an attempt to free Julia by force. Augustus was enraged at this disregard of the sentences pronounced by him and the Senate. He had Julia transferred to the military prison at Rhegium (Reggio) at the southernmost extremity of Italy and held in safe custody. There she died.

Augustus felt as he did when he received tidings of the battle in the Teutoburg Forest, where three Roman legions were cut down to the last man. He withdrew to mourn in seclusion.

Livia now regained the upper hand. With a judicious display of sympathy for her stricken husband she drew him nearer to her son Tiberius. This alone, however, could not satisfy the ambitious woman, for Julia's sons were still alive. Did fate come to Livia's aid ? Julia's two sons, Caius and Lucius, died. Public opinion in Rome suspected Livia of the death of both. Of the Julian kith and kin there now remained only the "wild" Agrippa Postumus, young Julia, and Agrippina. Augustus sent young Julia together with her brother Agrippa Postumus into exile, the latter "there to remain prisoner for ever".

Julia the daughter had led a life like Julia the mother, but more subtle, in face of her example.

Young Julia constituted herself her mother's avenger; with the aid of trusty lovers, she devised a plot for the deliverance of her exiled mother and her brother ; like mother, like daughter : she took her pleasures with the men who were to help her to power, whereby she proposed to overthrow Livia. Livia, however, was triumphant. Young Julia, the daring, adventuresome girl, who also regarded herself as a claimant for the Empress' throne and bestowed her favours now upon this, and now upon that man who promised to assist her to the imperial dignity, was strictly watched ; she was powerless.

Livia's son rose in the esteem of Augustus, so much so that he was appointed his successor. Victory now lay with Livia, who had fought with the cunning of a tigress for her prey. Tiberius was Emperor. Augustus was dead. A fresh rumour spread through the capital. Augustus wished to see once more the last scion of the Julian blood, Agrippa Postumus, whom he had banished on account of his dissolute character. He went to see him, accompanied by a single friend.

This reunion of the aged grandfather and his grandchild was the occasion for " the shedding of many tears and a great display of tenderness, which gave birth to the hope of seeing the young prince reinstated in his grandfather's house ". Did Augustus no longer find his grandson dissolute and wild? The gossips made much of the incident.

Augustus' good friend, his sole companion upon the journey, told his wife all about it the instant he returned to Rome. She ran post-haste to Livia with the news. Livia could only save the situation by the promptest action ; she immediately summoned Tiberius to Augustus' sick-bed, which, as many averred, his wife Livia had prepared for him, and induced her husband to give her son Tiberius the signet-ring, the wearer of which is always the Emperor. Feeble and sick, Augustus did everything his wife advised. Tiberius knew nothing of what had gone before.

An order by Augustus was then discovered, which the Emperor was said to have made out on his deathbed with the assistance of his wife Livia. The order was for the immediate execution of Agrippa Postumus.

Livia entertained a peculiarly hearty dislike for this, the youngest of the Julians ; he had always been most refractory to her commands ; she took this robust young man, who had none of the characteristics of the Julians, for an illegitimate child of Julia's. The execution was carried out forthwith.

Agrippa Postumus was under strict military guard on an island. It was arranged that as soon as the news of Augustus' death arrived the young man was to be put to death. The officer in charge of the guard entrusted the duty of executing the prince to a centurion, who, sword in hand, fell upon his unsuspecting victim. There was a titanic struggle between the two, for, despite the fact that the prince was unarmed, he was possessed of herculean strength. The last of Julia's male descendants was stamped out.

At last ! Victory lay with Livia and she breathed again in relief. She, the Claudian, remained uppermost. Of the women with whom she, the Empress, had had to wage the family war, not one remained. Octavia, Augustus' sister, was dead. Julia and her male progeny were all out of the way. Young Julia was under strict surveillance in exile.

Livia imagined that the time had now come when she could live her life in peace in the imperial house. An interlude : the young Agrippa Postumus had breathed his last under the sword of the Roman officer deputed for the task of dispatching him, when all of a sudden he reappeared. The old Empress Livia shook with fear.

When the news of the mortal sickness which had overtaken Augustus in his absence from Rome was made known, a slave of the exiled Agrippa Postumus made his way with all haste to the captive with a view to liberating him—no matter whether by force or by stratagem—and escaping with him to Germany, where Roman legionaries were stationed. Through their agency this slave, Clemens, wished to raise his master to the position of commander-in-chief of the armies in the field, have him proclaimed *Imperator* and thus set upon the imperial throne, by force of arms, if necessary.

But the ship in which Clemens took sail was a lumbering merchantman, and was outstripped by the swift imperial galley. All Clemens found was his master's corpse.

Deeply moved at the sight of the mortal remains of his murdered master, the bold fellow conceived an adventurous plan of revenge. He loved his master and hated his enemies. Consequently, he must avenge his master. As it was now considered superfluous, the guard on the exile's island had been withdrawn.

Clemens laid hands on such remnants of the prince's belongings as could still be found in his last resting-place and bore them off to Cossa in the Etrurian foothills, where he lay in hiding ; he let his hair and beard grow, to increase his already striking resemblance to his departed master, and prepared to make for Rome in the guise of Agrippa Postumus. Woe betide those who had killed his master !

Before starting on his journey to the place of exile, he had managed to assemble a not inconsiderable body of troops, who, with adherents of the Julian factions, were now engaged in preparing the reception for Postumus Clemens.

On his way back to Rome many people threw in their lot with Clemens' cause. Soon all Italy was in a state of turmoil. Clemens reached Ostia, the port of Rome, and proclaimed that Agrippa Postumus had come " to take possession of his grandfather's heritage ".

Certain members of the opposing party, however, stole over to the adventurer, feigning a desire to serve him ; but one night they bound him hand and foot and delivered him to the troops who were held in readiness. Clemens was executed in Rome.

Who was this prince Agrippa Postumus, Julia's son ? He had never appeared in Rome. Why, then, was he banished by the imperial house ? He was a wild offshoot of the Julian family tree. What does this mean but that he was a primitive, undisciplined fellow who was equally out of his element at court, or in office, or in camp ? A man, in short, who loved life. His favourite, indeed his only pastime was fishing. Whom did that harm ? What did it matter that, as an enthusiastic fisherman, he should call himself after Neptune, the god of the sea ?

He had no desire to deify himself or be deified; he was conscious of unity with mighty nature and he loved the sea, of whose life Neptune was to him the symbol. He built no temple to himself, no altars, founded no colleges of priests for their service and had no animals sacrificed. The temple to his sea-god was his wild, emotional heart, which rebelled against any attempt to fetter the natural course of life. Nature was his kingdom ; in the untrammelled motion of the sea he saw the reflection of his own character. There was no room for "world monarchy and reasons of state" there ; these things did not harmonize with the reality of life, which he loved. He wanted to live his own life and not be party to state intrigue and imperial hypocrisy. The creative force of life meant more to him than power, which destroys human happiness.

The result was, however, that his disposition and turn of mind were called "curiously perverse" and his behaviour "vicious". He soon, according to the verdict of his time, came to "an end in which his folly met with its deserts".

True, he was rude and hot-tempered. He insulted his grandmother, Livia, just because he was of a different, simple character. He treated his grandfather badly, too ; he reproached him with defrauding him of his patrimony—Augustus having kept his grandchild on very short commons.

Postumus was instinctively opposed to everything which as a human being he found unjust. But he had never lent himself to any designs upon Augustus' dominion.

Agrippa Postumus, a child of nature, was an unwilling witness of the doings in the imperial house, which to him were a mockery of life. He did not associate with other people, either, for he could not bear their attitude of mind or that of Rome as a whole.

And so, naturally enough, he was looked upon as a failure, degenerate and mad, and shunned on account of his "vicious" trend of thought, which was in contrast to that of the others. His blood mingled with the soil of the island of Planasia (Pianosa, near Elba), where the opposite tendency thought well to have him assassinated. Real life is looked upon by intriguers as inferior, and pronounced scandalous.

Agrippa Postumus is dead. The interlude is over. The drama continues. Blood finds no rest. It flows from mother to child and on to the child's child, never faltering in its course and thereby continuously feeding the mind.

The family feud of the Empresses had expired in a generation ; the new one began it afresh.

Julia's daughter Agrippina and Tiberius' son Drusus, whom his divorced wife Vipsania had borne him, faced one another and began the old feud afresh, with more vehemence than ever ; for by now all Rome knew of the family strife in the imperial house, waged chiefly by the women ; a Julian and a Claudian party had long been in existence.

Once more the Empress and the women who desired to become Empress opposed one another in private and in public with their armoury of malice, intrigue, jealousy, proselytism, murderous instincts, and espionage, and strove for the mastery.

The family scandal became a public spectacle, crueller than that of the circus, for here the welfare of a people, nay, of the world, was at stake.

It is the year A.D. 16.

All the members of the imperial family are in residence in Rome. The Empress-mother Livia and her son the Emperor Tiberius ; the daughter of the elder Julia, Agrippina, and her husband Germanicus, who was a son of Antonia, the widow of Drusus, Tiberius' brother, who had died in Germany ; Drusus II, son of the Emperor Tiberius by his first wife, Vipsania; and his wife Livilla, daughter of Antonia and sister of Germanicus. Agrippina and Livilla, sisters-in-law and moreover the wives of husbands who through their adoption by Tiberius in the interests of the State might call themselves brothers, are rival candidates for the privilege of some day being called Empress.

Who will gain the day ? Who has the best prospects ? The populace likes Agrippina ; she is virtuous ; has long been in Germany with her husband Germanicus and is therefore no party to the doings in the capital ; she is surrounded by a number of children. Moreover, as the daughter of Julia I, who had to atone for her sins so dearly, she is allied to the Julians. Her husband Germanicus is the idol of the people.

True, Livilla is a sister of the well-loved Germanicus, but her husband is of a rough, irascible disposition and the son of Tiberius, grandson of Livia, the Claudian. The women and their numerous adherents are ready for the fray.

His foreign policy required that the Emperor

Tiberius should dispatch his son Drusus to Germany and his adopted son Germanicus to the East.

In the meantime in Rome the supporters of the rival parties lay in wait for their opportunity to come to blows. This presented itself when, suddenly—in A.D. 19—the news reached Rome that Germanicus was dead. "That is the work of the Claudians!" cried the Julian party.

Livia had carried out her plan, namely, that her bosom friend, the wealthy Plancina, should also proceed to the East, travelling with her husband Calpurnius Piso, whom Livia had induced Tiberius to send there in a distinguished capacity. Thus Livia had the reliable Plancina to unravel secrets and spy out the land in Agrippina's vicinity, and could always learn to what extent the Julian influence was gaining ground in the army, which had to proclaim the Emperor.

Livia lived in a state of continuous suspense.

Livilla was at home, but Livia paid little attention to her, expecting no danger from that quarter, since Livilla was herself an enemy of Agrippina.

Scarcely had the news of Germanicus' death reached the Julian party in Rome than Tiberius and Livia were immediately credited with the death of the popular idol, all the more since it was known in Rome that in the East Germanicus and Piso had developed a mutual hostility which had spread to their wives, Agrippina and Livia's friend Plancina.

This accusation, however, was unjustifiable. Germanicus had gone to Egypt without his wife for a long time and had previously taken all sorts of pleasure trips in the East. He was enfeebled and succumbed to an illness.

While in the East with her husband, Agrippina herself was enraged against Plancina, Livia's friend, and her husband; she at once suspected her rivals of an attempt upon her husband's life. When finally Agrippina's husband lay at death's door and Plancina returned to Rome with her husband Piso, Agrippina was consumed with hatred and wrath. The dying Germanicus was told by his wife Agrippina that Plancina had caused poison to be administered to him. How was Germanicus to act on his death-bed ? What could he do now that he was utterly powerless ?

He knew his wife's passionate nature and feared the worst for her if he should die. He therefore made his friends swear in Agrippina's presence to avenge him after his death ; while Agrippina, who gave full vent to her frenzy against Livia and her cunning and deceitful friend, he embraced in the presence of his comrades, "imploring her, by her memory of him and their mutual love for their children, now finally to lay aside her ungovernable passion and her stubbornness, to bow her pride and her demands beneath the weight of destiny and, when she should return to Rome, not to anger the sovereigns, who were stronger than she, by claiming equal power."

Agrippina, in her agitation at the suspicion that her husband had been poisoned through the agency of Livia's friend, was not ashamed to exhibit her husband's body in the market-place of Antioch—everyone should see and recognize the marks of poison on the body. Notwithstanding the contrary opinion of the doctors summoned by the judicial authorities, the overwrought woman maintained her groundless accusation, for this was the most powerful weapon that she and her adherents could wield in support of her claims to the Empress' throne.

With all speed she dispatched a report on these lines to Rome, where the people were bewailing and mourning their favourite Germanicus ; at the same time the Roman people resented the fall of the old republic, which their favourite could certainly have restored ; for Rome by now was almost satiated with the friction concerning the throne. Agrippina's whole being clamoured for revenge.

Plancina, Livia's friend, was reputed to be well pleased with the solution brought about by the death of Agrippina's husband. She had left for Rome before Agrippina ; once there she could relate every detail to her friend the Empress, and the latter could make her preparations accordingly.

The funeral rites in the East were over : Agrippina, exhausted and careworn, began her homeward journey. She stood in need of rest, far from the imperial house ; but she was burning to return as quickly as possible to Rome, there to give vent to her illusion that her husband had been poisoned by the Claudians. Her passion racked her even more than did her husband's death. She had nobody to whom she could unburden her heart without reserve. She was in a foreign country, although everyone sympathized deeply with her in her loss—everyone who saw her mourning and lamenting, holding her husband's body in her arms, she who but a short time ago, in a circle of admirers, had been the happiest of women. And it was known that Agrippina was anxious about her future.

As the noble woman, accompanied by her children, took ship with the ashes of her husband, she was pitied by all.

It was winter; the sea was rough, and Agrippina had not the strength to continue her journey. Passing the mainland of Greece the ships stopped at the island of Corcyra, off the coast of Calabria.

For several days Agrippina tried to still the tumult of her harassed soul and so attain peace of mind. Miserably the unhappy woman spent her time in strict seclusion. With the loss of her husband all seemed lost indeed—domestic happiness, fame, and glory. Never could she bear to sink into oblivion, and therefore she was not crushed by grief for her husband.

The proud Agrippina had a goal to which her ambition was bound to lead her. The fate of her wretched mother Julia gave her no peace ; the knowledge that Claudians occupied the position prepared by her grandfather Augustus of blessed memory for the inheritance of the Julians spurred her ever on to new plans.

The fleet continued its voyage, making for Brundisium (Brindisi), the most navigable harbour of Southern Italy for ships coming from Greece. Agrippina's arrival and its cause were already known there. A crowd of sympathizers and sightseers had hastened from the neighbouring towns and villages to see Agrippina, who was now the centre of interest to every Italian. The harbour and coast of Brundisium teemed with vessels great and small ; the town was literally besieged with eager spectators, who had climbed the walls, roofs, trees, and taken possession of every possible coign of vantage.

The fleet was now in sight and drew slowly nearer. The spectators were quite at a loss to know how they should behave on its arrival, for nobody had ever yet seen vessels approaching Brundisium at so measured a course. The slow, funereal beat of the oars dies away into silence. The vessels lie at their moorings in the harbour.

With two of her children—she had left the others in Rome before her voyage to the East—and with the cinerary urn in her arms Agrippina, with bowed head, leaves the ship. The tension is relaxed. Agrippina's retinue break into loud lamentations and cries of distress, the crowd following suit and drowning the outcries of the *cortège* with their wailing.

The journey now proceeded along the Appian Way, which extended from Rome to Brundisium. Judging by the display of popular feeling at

Brundisium, Agrippina could not have desired a warmer welcome ; it fortified her for the continuation of her journey to Rome.

The Claudian Emperor had even sent two cohorts of the imperial bodyguard from Rome to meet her, and ordered all the authorities from Southern Italy to Rome to pay suitable homage to the ashes of his adoptive son.

In the procession to Rome the urn was borne by officers. It was preceded by the Roman eagles and military emblems of mourning. In all the towns through which the procession passed the people were in mourning. Everywhere they did what was customarily only done once in sacrifices to the dead, that is to say, they threw frankincense and rich apparel on to funeral pyres to be consumed by the flames. The people flocked from afar, bringing beasts for sacrifice and altars to the gods of death, and everywhere throughout Italy, so long as Agrippina was in their midst, there was mourning and the sound of lamentation. Tiberius' son Drusus, out of respect for his adoptive brother, even resigned his triumph and accompanied Agrippina's brother-in-law Claudius and her four children, who had stayed behind in Rome, to meet the procession. The two consuls and the entire Senate went forth weeping in procession from Rome to receive Agrippina, who could barely make her way through the dense crowds thronging the approach to the city.

" On the day when the mortal remains were laid to rest in the mausoleum of Augustus all the streets were filled with people, and the Plain of Mars gleamed in the light of the torches." The army, the civil service, all classes of citizens were represented ; they hailed Agrippina as an ornament to her country, the sole pattern of ancient Roman virtue, the only one who still had Augustan blood in her veins. Agrippina's name and fate were on all Italy's lips. But

Agrippina knows no peace. She wants to see Livia beneath her, and her sister-in-law Livilla too, but as long as Tiberius is Emperor her ambition is vain, for he possesses the obstinacy of the Claudians.

Tiberius appointed his son Drusus his successor. Night falls again on Agrippina ; she must fan the flame of her wrath, otherwise her life will be extinguished and with it the claims of the Julian blood to the imperial throne. Livilla's attitude towards Agrippina is so calm, possibly because her husband Drusus has been declared heir apparent.

Agrippina now began to stir up strife against the Emperor, pouring out the vials of her wrath and defiance. One day she made a sudden and furious attack upon Tiberius, as he was sacrificing before the statue of Augustus : " You sacrifice animals to the immortal Augustus in front of his statue of stone. Here am I ; me you reject. I, who am his living image ! Has the spirit of the divine Augustus passed into stone images ? The offspring of his celestial blood is here—it is I ! Stop this absurdity ! " Tiberius took the raving woman's hand in his own : " Do you think, my child, that you suffer wrong because you are not allowed to rule ? "

Then came the news that Tiberius' son Drusus, the heir apparent, had died suddenly (A.D. 23). Fortune was frowning upon the family of Tiberius. In Agrippina, however, hope sprang up anew and she conceived another plan. She was ill and Tiberius visited her.

She wept unceasingly while Tiberius regarded her. She heaped reproaches on her visitor. In the end the pitiable creature begged and implored Tiberius to save her from her solitude. " Give me a husband ! I am still young enough for one. I have never stepped aside from the right path, as you know. I have nobody in the whole world. Is there really no man in all Rome worthy to take care of the wife and children of a Germanicus ?"

Tiberius contemplated the woman of forty, worn with suffering, the mother of nine children ; saw her burning eyes ; thought of the man at Agrippina's side, of revolution, civil war . . . suppressed his feelings and logical conclusions, and left.

Once, when Tiberius was entertaining Agrippina and handed her the finest pear from a basket of fruit, she gave it to her servant to be tasted. Mistrust overcame her ; she suspected poison. Tiberius then knew how Agrippina felt towards him. The factions intensified the family feud ; Rome became unsettled. The college of priests and all manner of other dignitaries took part in the quarrel and conspired. Weary of the misery in the family, Tiberius left Rome for Capri, where he had a villa, entrusting his confidential friend and minister, Sejanus, with the care of state affairs and giving him plenary powers. The Emperor's friend promised to do all for the best; Livia, too, was still in Rome, and would quell Agrippina's arrogance.

Shortly afterwards the wily Sejanus asked his friend Tiberius for the hand of his widowed daughter-in-law Livilla. Tiberius, however, sought to dissuade him, since such a concession was calculated to enrage Agrippina still further against the Claudians, of whom Livilla was one.

Tiberius was surrounded by a circle of intriguers, slanderers, forgers, each desiring to be in his place—the first. Even his old mother Livia was reluctant to let the man of ripe years govern alone ; ultimately, the son grew to hate the mother for her domineering ways.

One day the old woman approached her son, the Emperor, with somebody's petition for a particular office, and literally commanded Tiberius to grant it. The Emperor indignantly refused Livia's presumptuous demand. An altercation took place between mother and son. At last Tiberius gave way, saying : " Very well, then, I will promote the fellow, explaining that his advancement was extorted from me by my mother." Tiberius was thus in the toils of Livia, Agrippina, and Livilla, each of whom had her following. The widowed Antonia lived quietly in the country and held aloof. She alone, the mother of Germanicus, Livilla, and Claudius, wished to take no part in the question of becoming Empress. Therefore Tiberius esteemed her highly, and thought her trustworthy. She could tell him, reveal to him, what the Romans were now whispering to one another as an open secret : " Drusus, Tiberius' son, died no natural death. His wife Livilla poisoned him." What ! Another hydra with a new head ? What is happening ? Has Claudian risen against Claudian in this age of chaos and madness ?

Livilla met the all-powerful Sejanus, whom Tiberius had invested with plenary powers : Sejanus, the handsome man with the ingratiating manners and honeyed tongue. She found her husband Drusus too rough. Livilla loved Sejanus, and gave herself to him ; for a long time she was his mistress. The cunning Sejanus promised to make the young woman Empress sooner than she could possibly be with her husband Drusus, the heir apparent.

In the absence at Capri of his friend and Emperor Tiberius, Sejanus waged secret warfare against Agrippina with the greatest audacity. He stirred up mutual strife between two sons of Agrippina's, advising the one to forestall the other with a rebellion to overthrow Tiberius and seize the throne. The result was the discovery of the plot and the death of the two Julian princes (A.D. 29).

Livilla remained in the background, waiting for her Sejanus, who was to make her Empress as speedily as possible. The coast was clear. Sejanus had seen to it—for himself, not for his Emperor. He himself wanted to secure Tiberius' throne through a union with Livilla. This unscrupulous woman, led astray by her senses, yielded herself to a man whose egoism and lust for power had brought her to murder her husband. He would not even have hesitated to remove the old Emperor from his path. Sejanus was executed (A.D. 31). Livilla, who had gone her own way and in unconsidered ambition, incited by her plausible seducer, had killed her husband, was cast by her mother Antonia into a dungeon, to die of starvation.

The prospect cleared ; the heavy shadows dispersed illuminating the chaotic medley of events. Had Agrippina at length reached her goal ? Had she well-nigh accomplished the revenge to which she was impelled ? Would her Julian race govern the world ? The old Empress Livia had passed away (A.D. 29). Of the Claudian women none was left. Agrippina's accumulated hatred and ultimate vengeance were now directed solely towards Tiberius. Had Agrippina marked her dying husband's words, she and her sons would not have been banished from Rome.

Tiberius was seventy years old, but Agrippina was wantonly impatient for supremacy. When the seducer Sejanus, before his intimacy with Livilla, his designs upon the sovereignty concealed in his heart, had tried discreetly to approach Agrippina, he was repulsed by her chaste demeanour. Yet she allied herself to the personal enemy of Tiberius, the Senator Asinius Gallus—who had married Tiberius' divorced wife Vipsania—and, goaded by her bitterness against Tiberius, helped to spread the rumour that the wife whom Tiberius loved so dearly had entered, during their married life, into a liaison with Gallus, of which the heir-apparent Drusus was born.

The affair, which at first was nothing but a family quarrel, soon involved all Rome. Agrippina planned a national rising to overthrow Tiberius. This treasonable activity was the cause of her banishment. Agrippina was adjudged to be an enemy of the State, the penalty for which was death. Tiberius, however, commuted the sentence to exile. Thus the unhappy woman was doomed to spend the rest of her life as a state prisoner on the desolate island of Pandataria under the strictest supervision. On the way she passed a brief interlude at a superb villa near the town of Herculaneum. There, however, the exasperated woman must needs indulge in abuse of everything which was not Julian. Consequently she was conveyed in a closed litter, in chains and under military guard, from town to town to southern Italy.

What a difference between this journey from Rome, through the entire length of the land, and the return from the East through Italy to Rome! Now the soldiers had to examine everyone they met, to make sure he was not a fellow-conspirator; and every traveller approaching the prisoner's conveyance was challenged and ordered to depart with all speed. In the closed litter Agrippina was misery incarnate, a captive. And yet how hope, fed in her by wrath and suffering, soared beyond her narrow confines! He will come—*must* come! Agrippina on Pandataria: around her stones and sand. The sun burns. No ship bringing the deliverer.—There! The dead stones breathe life, the desert is transformed into a garden, the hut into a palace . . . "Oh! my friends, have you come to deliver the princess? . . ." The captain of the guard receives the provisions brought by the ship, and hands a portion over to Agrippina. Agrippina recoils discomfited. The ship has brought the change of guard. For days on end, Agrippina has refused to take any nourishment. She dashes aside the bread the captain offers her with the words: "I will not be fed on Claudian scorn!" The captain threatens her with his whip.

With all her might Agrippina cries : " Had the course of fate been altered by a hair's breadth, you would be standing before me to-day hanging on my every word of command ! " The captain flourished his whip. " Does not the earth tremble, on which Julian blood is defiled ? Rise from the earth, ye rocks, and trample my enemy underfoot ! "

" How dare you flout the Emperor ? "

Agrippina shakes her fist at the officer, who cuts her across the face with his whip to keep her at bay.

" He struck me !—That man ! "

Agrippina's voice grows faint. Her hatred is extinguished, her thirst for revenge allayed. She has chosen voluntary starvation in preference to perpetual exile . . .

Through three generations fate pursued its revenge for the crimes perpetuated by Augustus against the citizens of his native land : those citizens, once proud of their freedom, upon whom he had striven to impose a state of permanent subjection to his family . . .

Agrippina the Younger, daughter of Agrippina, combined her grandmother Julia's frivolity with her mother's unrestrained lust for domination, and supplemented these highly developed qualities by innate criminal instincts. She succeeded in becoming Empress . . .

Clad only in a wrap of gold thread, Agrippina II occupied the throne as Empress beside an Emperor, presiding with him at a naval battle organized for the delectation of an eager concourse of spectators. A mammoth festival . . . for whose benefit ? Vanity loves to be seen.

Under the Emperor's direction a mountain, separating the lake of Fucinus from the river Liris, was tunnelled. Just before the boring was completed for the draining of the lake, an act of homage was to be rendered to the Emperor. The surrounding banks, hills, and mountains resembled a vast amphitheatre and were occupied by a great multitude from the adjacent towns and villages and from Rome.

The Emperor, in a superb marshal's cape, was beside the gold-clad Empress. The lake was enclosed by a circle of boats, on which stood battalions and squadrons of the body-guard, drawn up behind emplacements for the catapults and ballistae. The rest of the lake was occupied by galleys containing marines, the centre being left clear for the battle.

There was ample room for the long sweeping strokes of the rowers, for the helmsmen to display their skill, for the ships to attack, and all other appurtenances of the battle.

A " Sicilian " and " Rhodian " squadron, each consisting of twelve triremes and quadriremes, are the protagonists. The crews are composed of nine thousand criminals, imprisoned by the Emperor's orders. A silver Triton rises from the lake and sounds a blast upon his horn—the signal for attack. The battle begins. The hostile galleys and men bear down furiously on one another. Hundreds and thousands of men die, bleeding from their wounds, for the glorification of the royal pageant.

The drama is over, but another speedily follows. Wide bridges had been thrown across the lake for a land encounter. The sword-play was watched by a multitude which had been invited to a feast at the head of the lake. The Emperor and Empress again took part.

Suddenly, with a stupendous roar and crashing, the water burst through the cut in the mountain, bearing away with it a crowd of the revellers. A terrible panic ensued. The Empress Agrippina saw the Emperor in helpless consternation. Disregarding him, she immediately seized the opportunity to upbraid the prime minister, who had long thwarted her ambitious designs, for the disaster, alleging that the inadequate precautions were due to his avarice and cupidity. Agrippina in turn was accused by the minister of being effeminate, arrogant, and overbearing. The end of the great imperial pageant was a personal quarrel between Agrippina and the minister for precedence in their relationship to the Emperor. However, before reaching the stage of ignoring an imperial husband and abusing a minister, Agrippina had had much experience.

As a twelve-year old girl—scarcely more than a child—Agrippina the Second was full of ambition, and had not shrunk for a moment from an intimate relationship with her sixteen-year old brother, in whom she discerned the future Emperor.

Caligula, son of the elder Agrippina, and brother of Agrippina the Younger, committed incest with all his sisters, Agrippina II, Drusilla, and Julia. " Publicly, at table, he caused first one, then the other, to take her place below him at his left side, while his wife lay above on his right."

He idolized his little sister Drusilla. When he was " still in boy's clothes " his grandmother Antonia, to whose care the surviving children of Agrippina I had been committed after the death of their grandmother Livia, " discovered him sleeping with Drusilla ". Brother and sister were separated, the boy going to his great-uncle Tiberius at Capri, the girl remaining with her grandmother Antonia.

Caligula married. His first lawful wife was Junia Claudilla, daughter of Silanus. She died when Caligula was twenty-three years old and not yet Emperor. Caligula made his next choice on political grounds. He deluded Naevia, the wife of the war minister, Macro, with promises of marriage when he became Emperor, hoping thereby for her support in the election of the new Emperor; once Emperor, he banished the woman and her husband, who was a party to the intrigues.

Caligula's old passion for his sister Drusilla now revived. Without further ado he seduced her from her husband Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, and "treated her in the eyes of the world as his lawful wife", as Empress. In his will he appointed her heir to the throne. Thus, had she outlived Caligula, she would have reigned as Empress in Rome. Shortly afterwards, however, Drusilla died.

All Rome now had to mourn with Caligula, who scoured the countryside like a maniac and did not return to Rome for a long time. To his dearly-beloved Drusilla, who had been wife and sister to him, he caused temples "to the universal goddess" to be erected, behaving like a madman over her loss, but soon consoling himself with other wives obtained by force.

As Caligula's wives, the Empresses followed one another in rapid succession ; for Caligula, according to his mood, would declare a woman Empress, then dismiss her again. "Thus as Emperor he was present at the nuptials of Livia Orestilla and a certain Caius Piso ; forthwith ordered the wife to be conducted to his palace ; a few days afterwards, however, he sent her away again, and punished her two years later with banishment, because she had in the meantime apparently resumed relations with her former lawful husband."

One day he heard that the grandmother of Lollia Paullina, the wife of the general Caius Memmius, had been the most beautiful woman in the land. He instantly summoned Lollia, took her away from her husband, and married her, but only for a few days ; and forbade her "ever to sleep with a man again".

To Caligula, a wife as Empress was no more than a mistress, with whom a man spends an occasional hour. Only Cæsonia, "who was no longer young or beautiful, and already had three daughters by another husband, but was notorious for her boundless sensuality and dissipation, he loved more ardently and lastingly."

Agrippina paid little heed to wives of this sort. Already as a young girl she had made it her object in life to realize her mother's ideal—joint tenure of the imperial throne and transference of world sovereignty to a son—and was ready for a liaison with anyone likely to advance her plans.

On her husband Cnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus—"Redironbeard"—to whom she had been married in her fourteenth year, Agrippina could build no great hopes, notwithstanding his blood relationship to the Julians. When, after twelve years of married life with Agrippina, Ahenobarbus died, the sister again turned to her brother as the most powerful of all, and indulged with him, remembering their youthful days, in voluptuous orgies. She was ready to go to any lengths, even submitting to the embraces of her brother's friends, because he desired it and she did not like to cross him.

At the same time, however, Agrippina was on intimate terms with Lepidus, husband of her deceased sister Drusilla. Lepidus hoped to outmanœuvre Caligula and secure the imperial throne for himself; this seemed to him to present no difficulties, for he still considered himself the husband of Drusilla, a descendant of the imperial house. He easily succeeded in ingratiating himself with his friend and brother-in-law, entering into a close relationship with him and sharing his dissolute mode of life. Nevertheless, since Drusilla's death had robbed him of a powerful ally in the pursuit of his ambition, Lepidus turned to Drusilla's sister Agrippina.

Lepidus and Agrippina, equal in their craving for power, equally unscrupulous, joined forces to overthrow Caligula, while at the same time Lepidus still feigned friendship for Caligula, and Agrippina continued to gratify his incestuous desires. Caligula's youngest sister, the little Julia, also associated herself with Lepidus and Agrippina, while remaining at her brother's service for erotic indulgence.

Agrippina was attached for the moment to two men, either of whom might serve to accomplish her ends, for which she deemed no price too high. She was ready to abandon the one at a moment's notice should the other promise more.

Lepidus was confident of the success of his plan with Agrippina. But Caligula, who was also astute, indirectly discovered his sister's secret plans against him. Consequently he took both his sisters and Lepidus with him to Gaul in order to put an end to their machinations in Rome. There he had them all three arrested, telling them that he knew everything. Lepidus was condemned to death ; Caligula's sisters Agrippina and Julia were suffered to live—strange that he did not have them put to death also—but sentenced to lifelong exile. Agrippina had to leave Rome and, like her mother before her, was sent to a forsaken island off the extreme south of Italy, Julia accompanying her.

Friends of Lepidus begged permission of the Emperor to bring the ashes of their friend to Rome. Caligula consented, and the friends collected the ashes in an urn to be placed in the family vault of the dead man. "But," added Caligula, "I ordain that Agrippina herself shall convey to Rome the urn with her paramour's remains, keeping it on her knee during the entire journey."

Agrippina was now the most destitute woman in Rome ; all secrecy was at an end. Caligula had published all her correspondence with Lepidus and confiscated her property ; he even had her jewellery, furniture, slaves, and freedmen sold by auction. His appetite now whetted, he who had proclaimed himself a god further put up to auction all the remaining effects of his grandfather Augustus of blessed memory—

domestic utensils, works of art ; and, as his own auctioneer, employed every conceivable device to induce his customers to bid high prices. He cursed them for their avarice, declaring that they ought to be ashamed of themselves for not having more money in their pockets ; then feigned sorrow at the sight of imperial possessions passing into private hands. He was tireless in his auctioneering and money-grubbing.

Since he happened to be in Gaul, he had all the objects for auction transported thither, impressing for the purpose every vehicle plying on the roads to and from the capital, so that for a time Rome's food supply was seriously affected. This, however, left him completely indifferent.

Caligula was furious with Agrippina. He instituted proceedings against all her friends, and beggared Nero, Agrippina's three-year old son, by her marriage with Domitius Ahenobarbus, by confiscating the latter's estate, which was the child's inheritance.

Agrippina had been dashed from the summit of her ambition. But in the enforced inactivity of her lonely island she did not relax her tenseness of purpose. To her the exile was only a period of waiting for more propitious days, when her desire might be gratified. The daughter acted differently from the mother ; the younger woman was wise and took care not to assume an arrogant tone, which would have meant her end. She bowed to her fate and yet remained unbowed. She did nothing to cause her brother the least annoyance. Self-preservation was her immediate concern. Her little son Nero, now without father or mother, was entrusted like a foundling to the care of his father's sister, his aunt Domitia Lepida, the mother of Messalina.

Agrippina's child remained in the shelter of Messalina's parental home until Caligula's death. There the boy was supervised and educated by two slaves—a dancer and a barber. What a distance from confinement under the lash on the island of exile to the imperial throne ! But all doors open to the ambition that shrinks from nothing and fears nothing.

Caligula was dead. He met with a sudden end.

Chaerea, good, honest soul, a soldier and man of stainless reputation, was often enough the butt of Caligula's ridicule. As tribune of the prætorian cohort Chaerea had to receive the password from the Emperor. On such occasions Caligula would amuse himself by gibing at the old man for a petticoat-hunter and giving him passwords such as *Priapus* or *Venus*. If Chaerea had to thank the Emperor for anything, Caligula would " with improper mode and gesture, hold out his hand to be kissed ".

One whose honour had been sullied took upon himself to convoke a little band to murder the tyrant. Chaerea's sword struck down Caligula, and beneath the blows of fellow-conspirators the Emperor breathed his last. Another tribune of the bodyguard, Julius Lupus, was deputed to despatch the mistress-Empress Cæsonia, who stood, her little daughter at her side, in the palace before Caligula's bleeding corpse weeping and wailing : " Why would you never listen to me ? " Was this a reproach to the dead man for not mending his wild ways or for not disposing of everyone he suspected ? Lupus, advancing, heard Cæsonia's words ; she bade him approach, but Lupus stood as though rooted to the spot. Now Cæsonia knew her fate. She bared her bosom, invoking gods and men, and begged Lupus not to tarry. Bravely she received her death-blow from the avenger of the down-trodden people. The little girl, who had to die with her mother, was thrown across the bodies of the Emperor and Empress.

Agrippina was now free. Her shrewdness throughout all the privations and penalties of her exile had saved her life. She did not rage against her judge, but yielded, albeit rebellious at heart, and made no attempt at escape. She knew the day must come when her tyrannical brother would fall victim to an act of vengeance.

The bold woman was bent upon exacting full compensation for the two years in the wilderness. Not the slightest detail should fail of realization ; and if the nearest way were a long way round, never mind that.

Agrippina was young, only twenty-five, and trusted to her as yet unbroken will. In the first place nothing could be achieved without the goodwill of the people, and so she behaved as if her brother had done quite right to punish her. As became a dutiful sister, she promptly took charge of her brother's body.

The dismembered corpse of the Emperor had been speedily removed by some friends and taken to the garden of a rich banker, of the family of Lamia. Barely incinerated—for all had to be done in the greatest haste—the remains were simply shovelled beneath the grass. This gave rise to the rumour that the ghost of the murdered Caligula walked by night and scared the people.

Agrippina herself undertook to give the dead man peace ; bade her little sister Julia take part in the act of piety ; and both sisters made provision for proper cremation and burial. The first step towards rehabilitation was accomplished. On every hand Agrippina was regarded with approval. The new Emperor, Claudius, restored to his niece Agrippina the property which her brother had confiscated.

The next important step to be considered was that of marriage. What a pity kind uncle Claudius was married ! He had taken Messalina to wife. Agrippina surveyed the rich and the great ; for much wealth and powerful influence were essential to the realization of her ambitious notions.

There was Servius Sulpicius Galba, whom Agrippina had known well before her exile. True Galba was married, and that to Lepida, in whose care her little son Nero had been left during Agrippina's enforced absence, and had two children by her. This did not deter Agrippina from approaching the influential man, offering to become his mistress, inciting him to institute divorce proceedings, and proposing marriage to him. Indeed, she pushed her designs on Galba to such lengths that they became the talk of the town. At a convention of Roman matrons to which Agrippina was invited, Galba's mother-in-law started a violent altercation with her, which ended in Lepida's mother giving Agrippina a resounding box on the ears.

Nevertheless, Agrippina pursued her untiring efforts to captivate Galba, who was only a means to Agrippina's end, the imperial dignity. Therefore the beautiful woman was quite undismayed by his most unprepossessing appearance, with turned-in feet, bald, and bewigged. In the meantime Galba's wife had died, so that the coast seemed clear. Galba, however, had seen enough of the marital life of noble Roman ladies, and emphatically declined.

Agrippina continued her search. She was determined to ascend the throne, and for this she needed money. In her joint search for wealth and a husband her choice fell upon Crispus Passienus, who was, however, married to Domitia, a sister of her first husband.

Agrippina thought that a characteristic of Domitia's, mush disliked by the husband in his wife, might here be turned to account. Domitia was incredibly mean, notwithstanding her superfluity of money and property. In Roman society she was execrated for her cheese-paring habits. When somebody once happened to say that " she even sold her old shoes", she complained to the originator of this piece of gossip. " No, no ! " said the accused : " I retract my words, I was wrong ; I should have said that the *domina* Domitia Lepida bought her shoes old."

Agrippina felt it would be easy to supplant such a woman. Agrippina's offer was not inopportune to Passienus; the ageing man needed little persuasion; in her he saw what he could still desire, an attractive woman who would add a pleasurable interest to the relatively short span of life which was all he had left. He himself was immensely rich. What difference could it make, having an extravagant wife, so long as she kept him amused? Consequently Agrippina easily persuaded him to seek a divorce. But as a sequel to this, Domitia, the aunt of Agrippina's child Nero, became Agrippina's deadly enemy. The two women now joined battle for their very existence.

Agrippina's hands, however, were still tied. True, Passienus, now her husband, was extremely rich, but she herself had no money to organize a party wherewith to assist the Julian line to the imperial throne.

"If only Passienus would die! The old man outstays his welcome!"

Passienus had made a will appointing his wife Agrippina and her son Nero his heirs. Now was the time! Old Passienus died—through Agrippina's black magic, the rumour ran. Now for the downfall of Messalina, wife of the Emperor Claudius!

Ever narrower grew the orbit of Agrippina's intrigues. The wide curve described by the vengeful woman round her goal was steadily contracting.

The Empress Messalina at first left her mother to deal with Agrippina, for she herself felt sure of her position; she knew that her husband, the Emperor Claudius, was wholly hers, and she thoroughly understood how to make herself indispensable to him.

Messalina's mother, like the other Domitia Lepida whose husband Agrippina had ensnared by her wiles, was hostile. She was the younger sister of that Domitia and bore the same name. In this respect, then, Messalina could be quite at ease. Had not

Julia, Agrippina's sister, been banished a second time, a year after her return, on account of political intrigues with her friends and "adulterous relations", and subsequently put to death because she would not cease her plotting?

Instrumental in this affair were the Empress Messalina's devoted friends, who were at all times ready to fulfil the beautiful young woman's wishes, provided they could count on the lover's meed at her hands in return.

This Julia's fate was shared by the other Julia, daughter of the Drusus who was poisoned by his wife Livilla. She spent too much of her time near the Emperor; therefore she had to be removed.

Messalina jealously guarded her imperial rank which she had attained fortuitously, as it were. She wished to live as Empress of the world-Empire, and could not brook a rival's encroachment on the privileges which chance had thrown into her lap.

She was, however, quite indifferent to the feud between the Julians and the Claudians. Messalina felt herself to be the first woman in the land, who need not, nay, must not tolerate any other on an equal footing.

Agrippina had learnt wisdom from her sister Julia's fate. Once again it was a case of silence and waiting for her hour to strike. But now she knew that her enemy's daughter, whom she regarded as a usurper at the emperor's side, had actually compassed the death of her own sister, she burned for revenge.

Apparently calm, this woman, at home in any situation, spent her time first in the capital, then at one of her villas in the neighbourhood, to see with her own eyes or learn from informers what she could turn to account for the appeasement of her wrath and her ambition.

From her grandmother Julia she had inherited her extravagant sensuality and from her mother Agrippina her calculating disposition. She was wise enough, however, to make sparing use of both these qualities at present, so as not to prove her own undoing. She was the last of the Julian house, and must therefore take no more risks ; she had been warned by her earlier liaison with Lepidus, which had brought about her exile.

With characteristic acumen Agrippina, after the death of her husband Passienus, did not marry again. She now possessed his enormous wealth and could devote it to her future aggrandizement and that of her son Nero. " Who knows—perhaps good fortune is nearer than she thinks." Nevertheless, she was already in her thirty-eighth year, and Messalina, the Empress, was only twenty-three. The Emperor Claudius, who was three times as old as Messalina, was fond of his wife and saw no occasion to heed the calumnies of his niece Agrippina. Moreover, Claudius had hitherto not been very lucky with his wives, and so, in his advancing years he was much attached to his high-spirited young wife, gave way to her in everything and rejoiced that she made much of him, even if she only did so for her own sake.

" In his very early youth Claudius was twice engaged, once to the great-granddaughter of Augustus, Aemilia Lepida, then to a girl of the ancient house of the dictator Camillus ; she was called Livia Medullina and bore the surname Camilla. The former he disposed of on learning that her parents had once offended Augustus ; the latter died on the day fixed for the wedding. He then took to wife one Plautia Urgulanilla, but lost no time in divorcing her, on account of her unbridled licentiousness and because she was also suspected of being a murderess. The fourth was Aelia Petina, whom he also divorced—this time, however, merely for the sake of trivial misunderstandings."

Agrippina knew that her uncle, the Emperor

Claudius, " was on most occasions a mere instrument of his wife's interests and moods," and counted on this. But she also knew that Claudius was passionately fond of his little Messalina.

Messalina, thoughtless girl, who owed her position as Empress to the most mysterious workings of destiny, unrestrained by her weak husband in her rashness and frivolity, would one day expose herself to attack ; then the husband could easily be infuriated against his spoilt little wife. In the meantime the crafty woman did everything in her power to make her son Nero popular. The last of the Julians : he shall, he must, he will—be Emperor : So well did she play the part of the " disdained and oppressed " woman, with its piteous appeal, that the people evinced the liveliest sympathy for her—and this was of supreme importance to her plan.

It was the centenary of the foundation of Rome. At the circus there were magnificent games, including an equestrian display in which Nero, then just ten years of age, took part.

" Who is that ? Is that he ? What a splendid boy !—is that Agrippina's son ? "—Admiration . . . popular enthusiasm. The party funds had been well employed.

Beside young Nero rode Britannicus, son of Messalina and Claudius, his junior by two or three years.

The storm of applause was intended for Agrippina's son. Messalina looked condescendingly at Agrippina and ignored her whenever she possibly could. Claudius looked on.

Messalina and Claudius : the most ill-assorted couple imaginable. At just over sixteen Messalina married Claudius, then a man in the fifties. It is hard to imagine what could have induced this girl, so full of life and spirits, and who certainly had a wide choice among the young aristocrats, to wed the ageing and feeble-minded man. He was, indeed, a prince, and this may have persuaded Messalina's mother, Domitia, to press the union, especially as Claudius was a brother of the late universally beloved Germanicus ; hereby the mother Domitia would steal a march on her rival, the princess Agrippina, and raise her daughter Messalina to an equal rank. But who would have dreamed that this man, utterly unfitted to be Emperor, would ever ascend the throne ?

In common with most aristocratic Roman women of her time, the young Messalina undoubtedly saw in marriage little more than a screen enabling her to give free play to her wild spirits.

Through her brother Caligula's death Agrippina had certainly gained her freedom, but she was hard hit by the subsequent accession of Claudius to the throne, followed by Messalina, the daughter of her enemy. Domitia, the mother, was overjoyed.

Messalina had entered upon a period of riotous life : young, beautiful, overflowing with high spirits, careless, unprincipled, she spent her days and nights as though no least restriction should oppose the gratification of her wildly impulsive desires.

Claudius Emperor ! What was the purpose of fate in appointing this man Emperor ? Let fate tell the tale !

Caligula lay murdered in his palace ; above him, the corpses of the Empress and the little princess. Shortly beforehand he had been with the members of the imperial family—his uncle Claudius among them—at the theatre, where the play depicted the crucifixion of a robber captain. As it was the last day of the games Caligula was just about to leave the theatre altogether ; noon was approaching.

But Asprenos, one of the conspirators against Caligula's life, persuaded him to follow his usual custom, return to the palace without attracting attention, bathe, dine, and then come back. Caligula rose to go, whereupon Minucian, another of the conspirators, rose also. " Where are you going, my friend ? " asked Caligula. Minucian immediately resumed his seat. As the Emperor was preparing to leave, however, Minucian disappeared too.

All this created a stir among the audience ; for at the theatre every eye was on the Emperor's seat. Only Claudius, who was sitting quite close to the Emperor, noticed nothing. The audience seemed to feel some inkling of what was coming. Claudius, however, guessed nothing. Quite close to him a senator asked a consul if he had heard anything new ; but he spoke so softly as to be almost inaudible.

" I have heard nothing," replied the consul ; but he whispered in the senator's ear : " To-day the drama of a tyrant's murder is going to be performed."

" Hush ! We are not alone," replied the senator.

Chaerea, the ringleader of the conspirators, had left his seat shortly before Caligula and taken up his position with the others in the corridor leading from the theatre to the palace. He was impatient—Caligula was not coming quickly enough for him.

" Here he comes ! The Emperor ! "

Chaerea and his fellow-conspirators stand rigidly at attention.

Claudius precedes the Emperor and goes straight on with the retinue into the palace.

Caligula goes into the side passage leading to the baths.

Claudius does not notice that Caligula has remained behind, and potters on.

Meanwhile Caligula is in conversation with some boys of the chorus who are rehearsing for him. Claudius hears nothing of this. Caligula is now alone. In the narrow side passage Chaerea faces him and demands the password.

" Jupiter."

"May his wrath smite you!" Chaerea's sword flies from its sheath and buries itself in the hated emperor.

Chaerea's friends then fall upon the tyrant and dispatch him. The assassins flee to the adjoining house of Caligula's father, Germanicus.

There was an appalling outcry.

The imperial palace guard, composed of German soldiers, bestirred themselves. They saw their dead master, rushed about the palace in search of the tyrannicides, cut down everyone who approached them, stormed with drawn swords into the theatre, and encircled it.

The uproar in the palace was prodigious; the crowd of household slaves and servants ran hither and thither; soldiers searched every room; the place seethed with people. Night and day tumult reigned in the palace, alleys, streets, and markets.

Claudius was in a state of abject terror. He feared for his life and crept from one hiding-place in the palace to another. First he fled to the lower rooms to the so-called pavilion of Hermes, and finally to the very top, the palace roof with its superb balconies, where he concealed himself between the double curtains at the entrance door.

Rome was without an Emperor.

On the very next day, in the streets and the assembly, the campaign for the restoration of the republic was begun, with Claudius still in hiding in the palace. A few evenings later, as it was growing dusk, he emerged on to the staircase leading into the open; he looked uneasy. Hastily he withdrew into his hiding-place behind the curtain, falling flat in his fright. A common soldier, Gratus by name, who might once have been "a swineherd or stable-man in Thrace or Germany" had come upon him. He was still searching the palace for the assassins. The soldier noticed a curtain moving, went up, and saw a man hiding behind it. Claudius stretched a trembling hand through the folds and asked the soldier to approach. Gratus seized the hand, dragged forth its shuddering owner, and beckoned to some passing comrades. Drawing Claudius further into the light: "Why, it's Claudius!" cried Gratus. "I have done nothing! Do not hurt me! I know of nothing!" screamed Claudius. But Gratus turned on him: "Don't talk such nonsense! Caligula is dead—thank God! Come on, be our Emperor!"

Gratus and a handful of other soldiers took turns in bearing Claudius out of the palace on their shoulders, his own terror-stricken litter-bearers having long since fled. More and more soldiers gathered round the little group when it gained the open. All sorts of people came up and joined the soldiers, and soon a whole concourse was assembled. With the utmost speed the soldiers bore Claudius off to their camp, where he spent the night in fear and trembling.

While the members of the Senate debated the relative merits of a free republic or a monarchy, the soldiers were already resolved to proclaim Claudius Emperor. Fate, however, was bent on playing out the comedy.

The timid Claudius was afraid of the Senate, which might decide matters otherwise and call him to account. The Jewish king Agrippa, who happened to be staying in Rome at the time on a private mission, and saw an opportunity of benefiting himself and his people by the chaotic state of affairs, intervened in the course of events. He hastened to Claudius and sought to persuade the irresolute individual on no account to relinquish the power conferred upon him by the soldiers; for it was in the Jewish king's own interest that his advice should be accepted.

The Senate summoned the Jewish king in the hope of gaining his support. Rome, the mighty, was impotent. Where weakness is apparent, matters are simple for business-like activity.

The Jewish king Agrippa hid his intentions under a mask of intoxication ; anointed his hair and behaved as if he had just come from a carousal ; went in this guise to the Senate, feigning complete ignorance, and inquiring kindly after Claudius—whom he had just visited—how he was and so forth.

The Senate was deceived by the trickery, took the Jewish king seriously, and asked his opinion on the best form of government.

The anointed king then solemnly declared himself willing to sacrifice his life for the prestige of the Senate. Thus, in the twinkling of an eye, he completely gained its confidence ; beneath his mask he was now master of the situation. He reminded the Senate that in the event of a complication such as civil war Claudius, who had the veterans on his side, might win the day. In his own mind, however, he felt that as a monarch he would wrest more for himself from another monarch—and a weak one at that—than from a helpless Senate with several hundred heads.

Perceiving the vacillating mood of the Senate in consequence of his argument, the knowing fellow simultaneously reconciled all opinions by proposing himself as their intermediary in an amicable attempt to persuade Claudius to abdicate.

The deluded Senate, relieved at this solution, sent the Jewish king, in the company of one or two senators, as a precaution, to Claudius.

Once there, however, King Agrippa took Claudius aside and whispered to him secretly that the Senate was in a state of the greatest perplexity, and that in the delivery of his answer he should " display a sense of dignity in proportion to the greatness of his power ".

Claudius was in complete agreement with every word of the flattering King of Judæa. Thus did fate appoint the Jewish king as the instrument to provide Rome with a weak-minded emperor.

In the prætorian camp, the soldiers were still taking the imperial oath of allegiance to Claudius. Each member of the bodyguard received from the new Emperor fifteen thousand sesterces (£150), the captains receiving proportionately more. He made a similar donative to the other units of the army. The imperial dominion was established by money—out of fear.

Agrippa's duplicity earned him "all Judæa and Samaria, as owned by his grandfather Herod. In addition, Claudius gave him out of his own possessions Abila, which had been under the dominion of Lysanias, and the districts of the Lebanon".

Furthermore, Claudius settled a dispute between the Jews and the Greeks at Alexandria by an edict preponderantly in favour of the Jews; and proclaimed in a second edict that what he had decided in favour of the Jews in Alexandria applied to the whole of the Roman Empire.

This was decidedly a reward "worthy of the greatness of a Roman monarch's might", which the Jewish king Agrippa, with a view to his own advancement, had so flatteringly represented to Claudius.

Thus was Claudius called by fate, through the agency of a common soldier and a foreigner, to be ruler of the colossal empire, to be master of the world, the man upon whom, as a descendant of the gods, the eyes of millions were turned.

Claudius' elevation to the imperial throne was a victory for Domitia. She could flaunt her triumph before Agrippina's eyes, for her daughter Messalina was now the Empress. Agrippina could not look upon her uncle Claudius' accession as anything but opportune; her uncle, she thought, had only to keep his seat until her little Nero was grown up; in the meantime no other could occupy it. Her great stumbling-block, however, was Messalina.

Claudius himself soon became accustomed to his new position. At the earliest possible moment he saw that his relatives were duly honoured, as for example, when he "decreed the apotheosis of his grandmother Livia".

And Messalina?

She, and she alone, was the absolute sovereign.

The feeble Claudius, of "amazing instability of mind", a man who "in advanced age was considered unsuitable for employment in any public or private capacity"; who, long after attaining his majority found himself "still under the tutelage of strangers"; a man of whom his mother Antonia used to say, when she wanted to describe somebody as extremely stupid, "sillier than my son Claudius"; Claudius, Emperor, did not govern. He was governed by one-time slaves, his freedmen, who became his ministers. Messalina only needed him for her position as Empress. She did not, however, wish to be Empress for the sake of governing, but in order to be the first woman, receiving all life has to offer at first-hand, spontaneously, direct, only to cast it recklessly to the winds. Lo and behold! here I am, this is what I want, this is what I do, this is the urge of the life within me!

To be Empress!—To act the despot; to play a part; to behave arbitrarily; to be honoured, envied; hated, if hatred foments envy; to see the eyes of the whole world turned upon one, to radiate splendour; to call many possessions one's own; to have the world a slave at one's feet; to hold the right of pardon; to be officially styled "the best mother of her country"; to be worshipped on all hands as a goddess; to hold nothing sacred, in order to be deemed sacrosanct—to be Empress!

Is this the goal of human life? The meaning of woman's life? Messalina felt otherwise.

"To be Empress" in her own house was the highest ideal of every woman of aristocratic birth in Rome down to those whose financial resources barely allowed them to keep one slave; they were all smitten with Empress mania. Their passion had been inflamed by the man, who as a Roman, as the lord of the world, had inculcated in himself this overweening pride. Livia, the Julias, Agrippinas, Livilla, were types of the "Empress" whom the spirit of the age demanded.

For the sake of a pose, a conceit, a delusion, lives were to be sacrificed that intrigues might flourish.

The concept of a state predestined to failure if Rome had no Emperor—as formulated by Augustus who, with his own interests in view, complacently allowed his friend Mæcenas to expound it at great length—was exposed in all its unreality when a woman adopted it and applied it logically to her own life.

It was the Empress who unmasked the Emperor.

V

MESSALINA

Claudius was already twenty-one years of age, but on account of his mental inadequacy he was held in slight esteem by his relatives. His mother Antonia declared that "Nature had only made a sketch and not a finished drawing of him". The Emperor Augustus, Claudius' great-uncle, was very anxious about his future, particularly as regards the attitude of the imperial house in connection with his public appearances. In one of his letters to his wife Livia he wrote :—

"In accordance with your wishes, my Livia, I have consulted with Tiberius as to what is to be done with your grandson Claudius at the festival of Mars. We both agree that we must once and for all decide upon a definite plan in regard to the principles to be applied to him. For supposing that he is at all fit to be seen, and, if I may say so, *compos mentis*, why should we hesitate to put him step by step through all the degrees and posts of honour which his brother simply ran through? If, however, we are to look upon him as weak-minded and a physical and mental cripple, then we must not give the people, who are accustomed to treat his kind with scorn and contumely, any occasion to laugh at him; for that would recoil upon our own heads. Unless we make up our minds and come to some sort of decision, we shall be perspiring with anxiety every time the question of his promotion is raised, and we have to consider whether he is worthy to fill a post of honour or not. As regards the present case, to which your inquiry refers, we have no objection to his taking charge of the priests' table at the Mars festival, provided that he has enough sense to take advice from young Silanus, who is after all his relative, so that he does nothing which might possibly attract attention and arouse ridicule.

" We consider it undesirable that he should be seen in the imperial box at the circus games, for there in the front row of seats he would be too conspicuous.

" We find it equally unsuitable that he should take part in the Latin festival, whether he goes up the Mons Albanus in the procession or remains in the city. For why should he not be *præfectus urbi* as well during the four days of the festival, if he is qualified to accompany his brother up the hill ?

" These, my Livia, are our well-considered views, from which it appears best to settle the matter definitely instead of ever alternating between hope and fear. You may, if you like, let our Antonia read this part of the letter."

The Emperor could not have spoken more frankly ; in this affair of Claudius he was thinking of himself and of the prestige of his court, the artificial atmosphere of which might be impaired, in the public mind, by a human reality as only too vividly represented by Claudius.

It distressed Augustus to have an idiot—or " human abortion ", as Antonia called him—in the divine imperial family. He tried to improve his own private opinion of Claudius and in the process discovered an aristocratic vein in him.

In another letter the Emperor wrote to his wife :—

" While you are away I will invite young Claudius to table daily, so that he does not have his meals alone with his companion Sulpicius and Athenodorus. The poor fool, who ' is so very inept in all serious matters ', I only wish that he would be more careful in his choice of friends, and above all, in his pedantic search for intellectuals, not hit upon types of men like the two I have named, whose gesticulations, bearing, and gait he merely imitates without grasping their mental attitude. Where, however, his intelligence is not led astray, the innate nobility of his real nature is plainly evident."

Indeed, Augustus gladly ignored the deficiencies of Claudius, and was inclined to take the merely acquired for the inborn. In a third letter to Livia he wrote as follows :—

" My Livia, upon my life I am still amazed at the pleasure your grandson gave me when he delivered his oration. I cannot to this day conceive how one who in everyday life speaks incoherently can, in an oration, put everything so succinctly."

Uncle Tiberius, when he was Emperor, had judged his nephew Claudius correctly in sending him, in reply to his request to be appointed to a real post of honour, forty gold pieces with which to amuse himself on the occasion of some festival. Claudius was given the outward emblems, the purple-trimmed robe, the ivory seat of honour, and all the other accessories, but not the office itself.

The general public paid the royal imbecile the honours due to a member of the imperial family ; people rose from their seats when he entered the theatre. On a certain occasion he was honoured by an invitation to sponsor a petition concerning some act of homage to the Emperor which the knights wished to perform. These, however, were only outward signs of deference whereby the parties concerned hoped to benefit themselves. The sycophantic Senate even wanted to rebuild his house, which had been destroyed by fire, at the expense of the State. After Augustus, Caligula actually appointed Claudius to State office ; but that was like Caligula, who wanted to make his horse a consul too.

He was, it is true, honoured by admission to the new college of priests, founded by Caligula, for the purpose of sacrificing to the demigod Caligula, but he was obliged to pay eight million sesterces (£85,200) for the privilege. Since poor Claudius had not so much money at his disposal, he was obliged to pledge his goods ; and might see for himself, on the announcement-columns, how all his possessions were being officially put up to public auction.

One day people would treat Claudius like a prince and bow to " His Royal Highness ", the next he was good for nothing but a target for their jests and practical jokes.

When, as frequently happened, he came late to table, nobody would take the slightest notice of him. They scarcely made room for him, and he was obliged to grope his way round the table to discover a space to recline in. If he happened to doze off after the meal—which he usually did, for he had an enormous appetite and a thirst in proportion—they would throw olive and date stones at him, laughing derisively the while. When he began to snore in his midday nap they put coarse gloves on his hands ; there was a fresh burst of merriment when the poor wretch woke up and rubbed his sleepy eyes, scratching his face with his rough hands. When he was sound asleep after dinner the guests obliged the buffoons who were provided for their entertainment at every meal to rouse him with cuts of their whips and wooden swords. Of course, when the poor fool woke up, nobody knew anything about it, and Claudius was once again the ridiculous victim of a practical joke.

However, this did not trouble the imperial house very much. For from childhood until after he reached man's estate he had been in charge of a permanent supervisor in the shape of a groom from some outlandish region who, in obedience to the wishes of the imperial family, brutally ill-treated the boy at every opportunity.

Even when he began to assume office and positions of honour, he frequently fared no better.

Later, when as Emperor himself Claudius presided at the court of justice, they often made fun of him. At a certain trial somebody excused a witness whom Claudius had summoned. Claudius inquired particularly why the witness did not come. "He cannot," was the reply. Claudius asked again and again, receiving each time the same curt reply. At last, after repeated questioning, Claudius discovered the reason why the witness could not appear before the court. "Well, why?" asked Claudius. "He is dead. By your leave, I trust," said the man who had presented the excuse.

Advantage was often taken of his slowness. When he prepared to leave the court upon the termination of a case, counsel would sometimes shout at him to come back or, as he was passing them, catch at his robe or even trip him up to arrest his progress.

Once it happened that a wretched Greek, who had brought an action, had words with the judge, Claudius, and in his excitement called him an "old fool".

On another occasion a man was, quite unjustifiably, charged with disorderly conduct with women. When Claudius proceeded to call a whole string of prostitutes as witnesses against him, the accused in his rage hurled the sharp-pointed stylus and the writing-tablet, which he happened to have in his hands, at the Emperor's head, inflicting no slight wound and accompanying his action with a flood of abuse of poor Claudius, who, he declared, could be tricked by false witnesses into believing anything owing to his stupidity and cruelty combined.

This sort of thing, however, did not prevent him from going to the market place, often for days on end, to hear cases in court, even in the height of the midsummer heat. Only sometimes, when he smelt the roast meat which the priests were preparing for a meal in the vicinity, would he abandon everything to follow the odour and share the repast.

That men could have no respect for Claudius as a judge is not surprising. In a lawsuit he once gave judgment in writing as follows : " I find in favour of the party which has spoken the truth."

Claudius was not suited to city life. How, indeed, could he hold his own where every hour brought so many impressions that his mind could not cope with them !—And in such an environment, too, as had been destined for him ! Claudius' misdeeds—and they were very many—must be ascribed to his instability, weakness, lack of judgment, and the extreme impressionability of his irresolute soul.

As a child Claudius had been weak and sickly, and had not even been able to dress like others of his age ; he went about wrapped up in a mantle, with the hood turned up over his head, like an invalid or a convalescent who must be carefully protected against draughts.

Had he been allowed to live in some peaceful rural retreat, he would have enjoyed his life after the manner of a recluse. He took a keen interest in literature ; even if he did not understand all he read—his memory often played him false—he would at least have been able to lead his own life in solitude. As it was, he became the court fool for which he was taken. And oh, the imperial edicts he issued !—" For the approaching rich vintage the casks must be well caulked with pitch ! " " Remember, for snake-bite there is nothing better than the sap of the yew-tree." Claudius would issue twenty such edicts in the course of a single day. Admittedly a trait expressive of the ruler's benevolent feelings towards his subjects, who laughed, however, at their blockhead of a monarch. And when, as once happened, he did not organize the usual liberal bread supply for the people, owing to a shortage of grain through a succession of bad harvests, the mob pelted him with crusts in the middle of the market-place, reviling him so that he barely managed to regain the palace, stealing in by a back door.

Soon after this untoward episode he adopted a number of appropriate measures to safeguard the grain supply. Claudius did ?

No, it was his ministers who decided upon and took the requisite precautions. The ministers of Claudius were more powerful than himself, who was nothing but their servant. The interpretation of " minister " is " servant".

The ministers of Claudius were indeed ministers, in the sense of being servants of his house ; they were slaves, to whom their master had given freedom ; they were freedmen. The position is reversed : the erstwhile slaves rise to the head of affairs as masters and ministers, while the feeble Claudius sinks to the status at which the ministers began.

This was the origin of Rome and the Empire.

Across the broad plain in front of Rome—the Campania—the Aqua Claudia extends its length of forty-two miles from Sublaqueum (Subiaco) to the capital. Abundant sources are harnessed and the water transported by an aqueduct, supported by numerous arches a hundred and five feet high, to the Palatine, the imperial palace, and the whole city, where it pours into superbly-decorated basins.

The seaport of Ostia, which was completely sand-blocked, is restored and embellished with magnificent ornamental grounds. It is bounded right and left by moles, and a gigantic lighthouse is erected.

The lake of Fucinus is drained to secure land for cultivation. For this object thirty thousand men toiled eleven years at a canal extending for some five thousand yards through a mountain to the sea.

The city undergoes many improvements involving the erection of vast buildings. In the Circus Maximus all wooden or tufa objects were removed and replaced by marble decorated with gold.

It was Narcissus, the freedman and minister of Claudius, who ordered all this building and saw to its execution. Claudius merely had to lend his name and sometimes, to show his interest in the scheme, to go with Narcissus to Ostia or some other place where building was in progress. He enjoyed doing this, for on the way he would seize the opportunity for a round of dice of which he was inordinately fond, so much so that he had his coach fitted up with all the accessories of the game.

Felix, his minister for war, also a freedman, was the moving spirit in Claudius' conquest of the southern part of Britain. Thus was the reign of the incompetent Claudius marked by great events, in which he reaped the honour and his ministers the gain.

Pallas, Felix's brother, provided for finance without giving Claudius any insight into his methods.

Polybius, another freedman, acted as official adviser to the Emperor Claudius in his scientific studies, which he pursued to the best of his ability.

There was not a single Roman at the imperial court who had a word to say in the matter of government. Rome was governed by the foreigner—by Greeks. The highest offices in the state and at court were held by Greek freedmen.

The freedman Callistus was taken over by Claudius from Caligula.

Time was when Rome had subjugated Greece by force of arms, annihilated it politically, and believed it to be conquered ; now, at the very height of its power, Rome was ruled by Greeks. Greeks negotiated the policy of the Roman Empire, Greeks were responsible for Rome's conquests. Greek civilization pervaded Rome ; the modes and manners of Greece were accepted as a criterion by polite Roman society, in which, as at court, Greek was spoken whenever there was anything particular to say.

Everything was now in the hands of the Greek ministers. The Senate was virtually non-existent.

Cæsar himself, as a politician, had been wont in his arbitrary way to conduct State business at home during his morning toilet ; it was he, too, who received the diplomats. Cæsar had also from the outset favoured the now popular practice of using women as political tools ; he seduced the wives of his political opponents, counting on eliciting secrets from them in this way. What that uncrowned monarch had introduced was assiduously pursued by Augustus, the first Emperor.

In place of the monarch, this system was practised under Claudius by his ministers, the freedmen, who were Greek by birth.

The old republic has long ceased to be ; out of the *res publica*, the concern of one and all, a *res obscura* managed by individuals behind closed doors, has come into existence.

The *res publica* had no reason to fear the light of day. Now, however, obscurity is necessary to hide all public knowledge of the machinations of sordid, self-seeking commercialism and covetousness.

On the pretext of State authorization the cabinet ministers bartered public offices against the payment of considerable sums ; unfounded charges of *lèse majesté*, adultery, black magic, and every conceivable offence were preferred on a vast scale so that the estates of the accused might be confiscated " in accordance with the law " ; the defendants in such cases might think themselves lucky to escape with their lives, and it cost them enormous sums to influence the judgments in their favour.

From all sides money flowed into the coffers of the dishonest, corrupt, unscrupulous freedmen.

The construction of the harbour at Ostia, the carrying of the aqueduct through the Campania to Rome, the inauguration of public buildings and many other matters afforded innumerable opportunities of amassing wealth. Narcissus was thus enabled to become the richest man of his time in Rome ; he possessed a fortune of four hundred million sesterces (£4,250,000).

Pallas, who had a fortune of three hundred million sesterces, received, in addition to a shower of superfluous honours and recognitions, an official grant of five million sesterces for introducing a law for the promotion of female virtue which Claudius himself recommended to the Senate for adoption. This ran as follows : When a woman, without her husband's knowledge, associated with a slave she should herself be regarded as a slave ; if she did so with her husband's consent, she was to be deemed a freedwoman.

The senators heaped encomiums upon Pallas for this praiseworthy contribution to the welfare of the State ; and Claudius assured them that Pallas would content himself with the honour and remain in his original state of poverty. A decision of the Senate had to be engraved in bronze, in which the freedman-possessor of three hundred millions was praised to the skies for the thrift of bygone days.

A little earlier the same Claudius had made a speech eulogizing those senators who " on account of their restricted means had voluntarily resigned their seats in the Senate ", while simultaneously depriving the impecunious ones of their status, and abusing them into the bargain when they protested.

Where such folly reigns, every human passion has free play, and all men regard as right and proper their selfish efforts to come by possessions, no matter how. Greed for gold in Rome, and especially at court, was not to be appeased. Claudius saw and tolerated the incessant additions made by Narcissus and Pallas to their wealth by all manner of fraudulent devices. The wealth of Narcissus had become proverbial in Rome ; but his methods of opening up countless and ever new sources of gold were also universally known. Not that people condemned Narcissus for this, but simply followed his example.

Of Callistus, Claudius' immensely rich and dreaded freedman, it was known that he "acquired one office after another by all sorts of underhand means, shrank from no wrong, but did exactly as he pleased in the face of law and order".

Corruption, promiscuity, bearing false witness, embezzlement, bribery, procuring sentence of death were the order of the day ; these things merely assumed the aspect of means of livelihood.

Women came to be regarded by men solely as instruments in the execution of illegal and dishonourable bargains. The adaptation of women to such purposes proved the undoing of their sex. Women forgot themselves and imitated men with men's help. This was especially the case at court and everything associated with it, surrounding it, or desirous of illumination by its reflected splendour.

The Empress Messalina was completely in the toils of these court intrigues. She was used for them and she took advantage of them. At home Valeria Messalina had never seen or heard anything which might have given her strength to resist the ruling spirit of the age.

Messalina's mother was Domitia Lepida, a woman of high intellectual attainments, beautiful and rich ; but "immoral, notorious, passionate, violent". The brother of this Domitia Lepida, Messalina's uncle, who subsequently married the younger Agrippina, Messalina's sworn enemy, was in his eighteenth to twentieth year "in every respect an abominable creature". "A prize specimen of aristocratic insolence, brutality, and coarseness." At a carousal he had a freedman put to death, just because he "had refused to drink as much as he was told".

In a fit of brutal arrogance he drove full speed at a boy near a small village on the Appian Way and wilfully ran over him. In the Forum he became involved in an altercation with a Roman knight ; the latter retorting with some heat, he dashed out one of his eyes. Furthermore, he behaved most shabbily in money matters ; he evaded payment of the bankers who had made purchases on his behalf ; he exploited his position as a high official to cheat the circus charioteers out of their prizes, adding insult to injury by treating the affair as a joke and laughing at them. This uncle of Messalina's was notorious for his profligacy ; he was accused of adultery on numerous occasions and of incest with his sister Lepida ; finally arrested, he was only released through the coincidence of a change of sovereign.

The ancient family of the Domitians, to a branch of which Messalina belonged, was morally degenerate. A legend was attached to the line bearing the surname " Ahenobarbus " (" Redbeard "). The progenitor, Lucius Domitius, was on his way home from the fields one day when he encountered two men of superhuman majesty. As he was passing them they commanded him to tell the Senate and the Roman people, the moment he arrived home, that the Romans had been victorious at lake Regillus, and that the great battle between the young Roman Republic and the Sabines incited to the destruction of Rome by the arrogant outcast, King Tarquinius, had been decided. The two godlike men had suddenly, as the battle neared its climax, dashed to the front on the great chargers of the Roman cavalry, sweeping all before them, and routed the hostile royal forces. In Rome itself nothing was yet known of the issue of this battle of freedom against oppression. The two mighty men—they were the Dioscuri, Castor, and Pollux, the sons of the god Zeus—had held Lucius Domitius worthy to be the herald of these glad tidings to his people. Towards evening the same divine youths rode into the Forum in full battle array and proclaimed aloud the victory of the Romans and the deliverance of the people from the oppression of the king. When the *præfectus* *urbi* tried to find and welcome the two they had disappeared and were never seen again.

On their meeting with Domitius the two, as a sign of their divinity, had touched Domitius' cheek, turning his black hair and beard into russet bronze. This distinctive mark, conferred by the gods, remained in the Domitian family, almost all the members of which had had reddish hair since the marvellous meeting with the Dioscuri.

The Domitian tribe was obstinate, hard, and passionate ; with a strong sense of duty, but also yielding whenever the power of self-interest asserted its claims.

In Messalina's grandfather Domitius this ingrained ardour was expressed by his cruel, domineering ways, so much so that the Emperor Augustus had to promulgate an edict ordering him to exercise restraint in the matter of his savage gladiatorial games and wild beast fights, which he organized not only in the circus, but in every quarter of the city. In his craving to add an unwonted zest to life he abused his authority as consul by ordering Roman knights and patrician women to appear on the stage, normally occupied only by the despised professional actors of no social standing.

This Domitius had been Mark Antony's legate when the latter, shortly before Octavianus Augustus became Imperator, opposed Octavianus in the civil war. Antony had allied himself with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, in opposition to Octavianus and his marshal Agrippa.

The officers and men of Antony's forces were weary of the supposed subordination of their commander-in-chief to a woman, Queen Cleopatra, and moreover they had met with disaster, so they offered the supreme command to the legate Domitius Ahenobarbus. It was shortly before the sea fight between Rome and Egypt off Actium (31 B.C.), that little spot situated on a cape on the north-west coast of Acarnania, which played so great a part in the rise of the world-empire Rome.

Domitius, who felt exhausted and ill, was all unnerved. In a small boat he went secretly over to Octavianus' fleet, forgetting his soldierly duty to his chief Antony. He was overwhelmed by homesickness, longing for Rome and his neglected love, Servilia Nais. Within his enfeebled frame the life force was clamorous. Domitius has been blamed for this, but Antony himself said that longing for his well-beloved had made him a deserter. With scornful magnanimity Antony dispatched all his impedimenta, retinue, and friends in his wake.

Such was the action of Antony, who a few days later himself left his whole army in the lurch, obeying his own yearning for love, when after the disastrous battle of Actium he saw the admiral's ship—named "Antonia" after him—in flight, with the swelling purple sail, bearing with it his beloved Cleopatra.

In the spiritual conflict between duty and life the decisive factor with Antony, as with his legate Domitius, was the call of life.

Messalina belonged to this Domitian house with its passionate love of life.

It is a key to Messalina's own character that an eager craving for the pleasures of life, regardless of the conflicting dictates of duty, loomed so large in her family.

One of Messalina's ancestors was once a prisoner on the island of Corfu. The restrictions imposed upon the freedom which he had always proudly asserted chafed him to such an extent that he fell a prey to despair. In this mood he resolved to poison himself. His physician, a slave, obediently handed him the poison. No sooner had Domitius taken it, however, than the vital spark blazed up within him and he was seized with appalling terror at the thought of death. He immediately took an emetic to save his life.

When his physician told him that he had intentionally given him only an insufficient dose of poison, Domitius freed him from the galling fetters of slavery.

The life force strives to construct an organism within the framework of its inherent laws. But barriers interpose to impede the process and seek to exploit this organism for purposes foreign to its end. Force of habit ultimately consecrates the path of life, however deflected from its natural course ; morality and duty arise to control the life force. When, however, some extraneous influence rouses this force from its well-worn groove, it leaps towards freedom.

Purpose is the name given to the brief, trivial, temporal goal to which the life force is so often sacrificed. This temporal goal appears in the shape of possessions ; riches and money ; power. The means to this end are delusions, fancies, greed, ruthlessness, oppression ; lies leading to the great error that life is meant to be devoted to the sole pursuit of selfish ends and finds there its consummation.

When such a materialistic conviction gains the upper hand, the hope of any respect for life becomes Utopian. Life is wasted, thrown away, abused, desecrated ; adherents of this belief imagine themselves, through reckless indulgence in sensual pleasures, to be the lords and masters of life, although in fact they are only the victims of a dogma which compels them to defile life.

Rome did not know the wonder of life. Rome knew much that was strange, wondrous, marvellous ; but the wonder of life did not dwell there.

Sovereignty at the imperial court was given up to a calculated organization of sensuality. Not a soul was left who could spare a thought for the growth of his spiritual life, wherein calculation was useless.

And so each man thought only of his momentary advantage which he hoped to secure, not even by fighting for it, but by cunning, duplicity, and treachery. Since such matters require an accomplice, mistrust, hypocrisy, faithlessness, fraud, and treason had became general.

In the centre of this perverted human life stood the imperial palace and those in its service. Its influence permeated the remotest depths of the population. The distinction between right and wrong had been lost. Truth and untruth no longer counted as standards in the conduct of life.

Men disposed of other people's money as though it were their own. If a man liked another's house, he succeeded in obtaining possession of it by false statements. A very rich man lived in constant fear of the institution of illegal and groundless proceedings against him for *lèse-majesté*, practising sorcery, or some other trivial and false charge. Conviction was certain, for informers and attorneys profited considerably thereby, while many intermediates, such as false witnesses, were given opportunities of acquiring wealth.

At the court of the Emperor Claudius this system reached unprecedented lengths, for the freedmen found such a source of income very acceptable. Nothing was left for Claudius but to sign the written verdicts prepared in readiness : which he did.

He sentenced people to death on the strength of pure suggestion and hearsay, and then forgot that he had signed the warrants. It is certain that there were many other executions of which the Emperor was not told ; those responsible for them counted on the Emperor's forgetfulness if any subsequent mention of the sentences should be made at court.

" He sentenced thirty senators and upwards of three hundred judges to death so heedlessly that when the centurion made his report to him on the execution of a man of consular rank with the words ' Your order has been carried out ' he denied having given any order at all ; nevertheless, he expressed his approval of the proceeding because his freedmen suggested to him that the soldiers, as executioners, had done their duty in punishing an enemy of their Emperor on their own initiative."

How much money and property of such men, who were certainly done to death at the instance of the slaves and freedmen at court, must have flowed into the coffers of the freedmen !

Claudius, whose mental deficiency made him absent-minded, would even invite to a banquet Roman patricians whom he had just caused to be executed.

The informers and spies whom he employed relied upon this mental deficiency. Certain people were brought before him to be reprimanded on account of their domestic affairs. When Claudius began to reprove them for being unmarried and childless, they were able to produce immediate proof to the contrary. Another time he ordered chastisement for a certain person who had been brought before him on a charge of attempted suicide. The accused, stripping in Claudius' presence, demonstrated the absence of foundation for the charge. People played on the weakness of the Emperor, persuading the incompetent man, who was unequal to the requirements of his position, to deeds which, of his own accord, he would often enough have left undone; they concealed from him as much as they fathered on him.

Claudius scarcely ever relied upon his own judgment; questioned about some everyday matter, his constant reply was : "Ask my steward." He was incapable of distinguishing between friend and foe, for his attention was invariably attracted or distracted by the external impression of the moment. With him, it was "out of sight, out of mind". Only when he was alone and could commune with his own thoughts did he succeed in saying what he treasured in his soul and what his own convictions were. This was seldom the case, however, for he was always surrounded by a chattering throng of courtiers, who confused his mind still further.

Sometimes, when he spoke from his own experience, he astounded his hearers by his lucidity of expression ; unfortunately, however, such matters were generally of a trivial order. One day the Senate was debating a new decree regarding taverns and butchers. Suddenly, right in the middle of the curia, he cried : " I ask you, who on earth could live without a bit of sausage ? "—and forthwith proceeded to give a most graphic description of the old taverns with their interiors and fittings, expatiating upon the wines and dishes provided there and the manner of their service. For before he was Emperor and, as an outcast, had to lead a lonely, very modest, and simple existence he was a regular patron of taverns, where he would eat and drink with people of the middle class.

Why could he never live in the atmosphere for which he was intended ?

As universal sovereign, with millions of subjects, Claudius cut a sorry figure in the midst of mercenary men, who made fun of him, gave him bad advice, and exerted the worst influence upon him ; he was his freedmen's puppet. No one was allowed to approach the unfortunate man but his freedman, by the decision of the latter.

A satirical poem on Claudius, which appeared shortly after his death, ran as follows : "(In the next world) one would have thought that all those present were his freedmen, so little attention did anybody pay to him." The subject was the apotheosis of Claudius. After the gods of the other world had long debated what was to be done with this figure, who had been born of the wrath of the gods—for who could possibly worship this man as a god or believe in him ? If such individuals were to be made gods, not a soul would ever believe in the gods again—they settled the point by making Claudius the humble servant of a freedman.

The travesty of a solitary bookworm, whose eyes were continually forced to contemplate the horrors of the world ; a helpless creature, who had ears only for what was whispered into them ; a being with no will of his own . . . At his side, Valeria Messalina, of headstrong character and abounding vitality : a Domitian. Both in a chaos of the sparks, lights, sounds, and cries of a reeling world in which the two should have united to proclaim their devotion to the cause of the welfare of humanity in a world empire.

Was this the happiness for the sake of which Agrippina looked so enviously upon Messalina ? Before Messalina became Empress, her rival had kept a sharp eye upon her movements; now, however, that she was where Agrippina wanted to be, the battle began.

Agrippina would have married a man still more ineffectual than Claudius, so long as he was Emperor. What she cared for was power. That she, with the fabulous wealth inherited from her late husband Passienus, should have to witness more or less passively how another, Messalina, the daughter of her enemy into the bargain, dominated the Emperor and was also determined to make her son successor to Claudius, was too much for Agrippina.

Messalina, however, was thinking neither of the succession nor of her little son.

But Agrippina did not know this, and would not have believed it if anyone had told her so. She was haunted by the saying of the astrologers whom she had once consulted about her little son Nero, was under the spell of the prophecy that her child Nero would some day be sovereign and murder his mother. " Let him kill me, so long as he is Emperor ! "— Agrippina had exclaimed at the time.

The goal of the power spirit—that was her dream for herself and her son.

Oh ! but Messalina is so young ! She can live a long time still. Claudius is old, to be sure, but hardy. No reliance can be placed upon the natural course of events. Therefore Agrippina racks her brains how to compass the removal of Messalina.

There was no doubt that Messalina had a firm hold over Claudius. A glance from the fascinating woman, a gesture, an access of gaiety, and Claudius was invariably her captive. Indeed, he was passionately in love with his Messalina. Yet his character was vacillating ; he was frequently unable to retain his impressions. They paled, or others superimposed themselves. This was the only thing of which Messalina was really afraid. But soon she would be sure of him again, for she could rely upon her never-failing charm.

This kept Messalina confident and unconcerned. In the meantime Agrippina invented all sorts of legends to influence public opinion against Messalina. Thus, for instance, on one occasion a serpent's skin was found in young Nero's bed.

Aha ! This was immediately manufactured into a myth, which was to bear the impress of reality : " Messalina was said to have dispatched certain persons for the purpose of strangling the young Nero during his mid-day rest, because he was the rival of Britannicus, Messalina's little son by Claudius. The assassins, however, took to flight, for to their utter consternation a serpent wormed its way out of the mattress."

Agrippina saw to it that the legend of the serpent received the necessary corroboration. She had the detected serpent-skin set in gold and wrought into an armlet medallion ; Nero had to wear this amulet on his right arm, that it might attract attention and elicit universal queries as to the origin of the strange ornament.

This fictitious incident was soon the talk of the town. The report of a plot on Messalina's part against the life of Agrippina's son continued to spread, and everybody contrived to supplement it from his own imagination. Finally the legend was evolved that Nero in his childhood had had dragons for guardians.

Such creations of a malevolent imagination could only harm Messalina. But Messalina did not worry about Nero. She confined herself to taking good care that no woman of influence neared Claudius ; not on account of jealousy of Claudius, but of her jealous regard for her own interest as Empress for life.

Messalina was accustomed to her husband, with his strong sensual propensities, maintaining mistresses in the palace itself. His predecessor Caligula had gone so far as to instal a brothel in it. Calpurnia and Cleopatra, imperial mistresses, behaved in the palace as if they were court officials ; they were on familiar terms with the ministers, and were witnesses—well-paid for their discretion—of many a palace secret affecting the freedmen, ministers, and minor officials.

All this failed to move Messalina. She was the Empress and meant to remain so, for her own sake, entirely in her own interests. So long as a mistress kept within her own " sphere ", Messalina raised no objection. " Live and let live." But women like Agrippina's younger sister Julia, Messalina could not brook in Claudius' neighbourhood ; her own position forbade it.

The haughty Julia, Claudius' niece, was endeavouring in her high-handed Julian way to create a breach between Messalina and her husband. Moreover, she behaved towards the young Empress with scornful condescension, acted as though she alone were entitled to stand beside Claudius, her blood relation, and made amorous overtures to gain the weak Emperor's favour.

Furthermore, Julia had embarked upon a liaison with Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the moralist philosopher, that past master of moral lectures who talked so much about virtue, without, however, paying much attention to the sociological problems of his day whenever his own possessions or personal interests were at stake. Such sanctimonious idealism was abhorrent to Messalina's nature. She could not flirt with science and philosophy, as Agrippina, also a close friend of Seneca's, was fond of doing. To the Domitian, so full of vitality, this was but a flimsy substitute for life. Life naked and unadorned —that was what struck an answering chord in Messalina. She saw in the philosopher's moralizings a restriction of her desires, and feared that her husband might be set against her by this champion of morality. And so she demanded his head.

Messalina, who gave free rein to every passing impulse, promised her favours to some friends who were willing to fabricate an accusation against Julia. As Julia's associate Seneca was implicated together with several others and condemned. Julia was banished to the rocky islands off the southern shores of Italy. Seneca's death sentence was reprieved by an act of imperial clemency ; but the philosopher had to leave Rome and vegetate as an exile on the island of Corsica.

The other Julia, daughter of Tiberius' son Drusus by Livilla, met with the same fate. Messalina grew suspicious of her too ; her influence over the Emperor, who was far too susceptible to feminine overtures and often enough made rash promises, had become too strong for Messalina's liking.

But how could Messalina alone have brought about such sentences if Suillius, one of the subtlest of informers, had not placed his services at her disposal ? This despicable creature throve as a professional denouncer. He went to Claudius with well-prepared, shrewdly-conceived accusations, which the liar delivered with telling force. Thus he called Seneca, for example, an enemy of the Emperor's friends, among whom he claimed to be counted.

Messalina had acted without the least reflection. She had placed her confidence in this Suillius, a professional, unscrupulous denouncer who wanted to make money, who was himself a criminal, having robbed his confederates in Asia and embezzled sums of money, for which he was duly indicted at a later date.

It never occurred to Messalina that by such a procedure and allowing herself to be caught in an informer's net, she not only fanned the flames of her enemy Agrippina's hatred and intensified her ardent longing for sovereign power, but also endangered her own position. She acted according to the mood of the moment and situation, grasping any random chance of gratifying the desires of her emotional temperament, if it were at all opportune. Messalina was free from calculation, from despotic tendencies for the sake of sovereignty itself, and from imperial arrogance.

She did not, however, disdain intrigues which were in the nature of comedy, for she herself was entangled at court in an immense net of them, which the freedmen daily increased by a thousand meshes.

To hold her ground, not to lose her position, and, in particular, to lead her life as she desired, she needed the freedmen, the all-powerful, as aiders and abettors. Since in Rome, however, nothing happened or was done at court except for personal gain and advancement, Messalina did not scruple to show the ministers that she was willing to oblige them. They for their part gladly availed themselves of her offers, for thus they were in their turn covered in their plotting, arbitrary dealings and self-seeking.

Beware! In all converse between a man and a woman lurks the two-edged sword. In a moment, the word that but now was a healing balm is turned into a venomous poison. Besides there are so many who misconstrue one's words, eavesdroppers and informers.

Woe betide the man who was no hypocrite ! Dissimulation is a valuable asset, but only to him who wishes to turn a situation to advantage. Everyone knew this and consequently had to reckon with surprises. Accordingly, sentence of death was not unexpected by many a man to whom it came.

" The happy times, in which a man may think what he likes, and say what he thinks, are so rare."

" Shut the windows, cover the crannies, lock the doors, remove the light, dismiss every living soul, let none remain behind—and yet ere the next daybreak everybody knows what one is about, before the cock crows twice," warns the contemporary satirist. Spies are ever on the watch, misinterpreting what they overhear into something to their own advantage. And everyone of the deceivers bears himself as proudly as if he were the soul of honour.

" You condemn uncleanliness and are yourself steeped in the mire of the hypocrites, whose lips overflow with sanctimony, what time they live in corruption."

To whom should Messalina turn for support ? Her husband was an imbecile. During his reign, to be sure, he wrote much and even caused his utterances to be read aloud in public by a lictor.

But what good was that to Messalina ?

He also wrote a Roman history—not without difficulty, for his mother Antonia often snatched the stylus from his hand while he was engaged on it, and his grandmother Octavia, the widow of Mark Antony, used to abuse him for it. For Claudius was writing about the late civil war, towards the end of which Mark Antony, as general, had cut a sorry figure, and—fools might tell the truth. What did he not write besides ? In addition to this historical work, comprising twenty-three volumes, he devoted eight more to his own life, in which, it was said, people missed " intelligence and good taste more than graceful style ", and proceeded to compile a Tyrrhenian and a Carthaginian history, the one in twenty, the other in eight books, which were preserved in a new museum in Alexandria erected in his honour.

Messalina certainly studied none of these books. She went her own way and let her husband go his. So long as he worked away at his invention of new letters for the alphabet, Messalina was quite content, free from care and fluttering light-heartedly hither and thither; it was only when an ambitious woman appeared on the scene that Messalina grew anxious.

Claudius never knew where his wife was; she spent quite a good deal of her time in his company, but when he applied himself to his historical researches and writing books she was nowhere to be seen. Nor did he miss her at such times. Historical research had from his youth upwards been his favourite occupation. The historian Titus Livius aided him in his labours out of sheer pity, and his table companion Sulpicius Flavus helped him with the task of writing his history.

Messalina did not take her husband or his historical labours seriously; for he himself helped, just where this very occupation of his was concerned, to make himself ridiculous.

" When for the first time, in the presence of a numerous audience, he gave a lecture, it so happened that, at the very beginning, a bench broke down under the weight of a monstrously fat man." General laughter followed. Claudius himself laughed immoderately with the rest. At last the noise subsided, and Claudius prepared to continue his discourse. Suddenly, however, he burst out again into a prodigious roar of laughter, and described so graphically the foregoing incident of the fat man and his crash through the bench, that everybody started laughing afresh.

Again Claudius resumed the thread of his lecture ; but again he began to depict the incident, and then to laugh, and continued to do so again and again, with a few sentences in between, starting a fresh outburst of merriment every time. At last the laughter of his hearers turned against the lecturer himself, and Claudius was obliged to break off, since his audience had ceased to pay attention.

Before her marriage Messalina must certainly have heard of this ill-fated lecture, which Claudius delivered long before he was proclaimed Emperor ; indeed, it became the talk of the town. Messalina knew that this was the right husband for her.

Did he know it himself ? How often—every hour, every minute—was he not heard to say, when addressed in terms suited to his weak intellect : " What, do you by any chance take me for a Theogonius ? " Theogonius was a proverbial idiot of Claudius' time.

Beside such a man his wife was bound to feel as though she were single. Everything conspired to make Messalina, so passionate and athirst for life, feel free as a bird that trusts to its wings and the air currents supporting it.

Messalina and the freedmen—the bird in the air that supports it.

The court servants knew all about Messalina's escapades. But they never told Messalina that they knew, for she could be dangerous to anyone who opposed her. Therefore they let her go her way ; after all, she was doing nothing against the institutions of the monarchy or against the Emperor.

What they did, however, was to pad out and exaggerate everything, feeding Roman society, which hankered after sensation and gossip, on the result. Her enemy Agrippina and her following saw to that, thereby greatly extending the length of the blacklist whereon Messalina's " deeds " were inscribed.

Agrippina kept a strict account of everything which came to her ears about her enemy and placed it at the disposal of the writers and historians. After her death it was kept up by the adherents of the Julian party, so that posterity might put Messalina in the shade and glorify Agrippina. The freedmen did not lose sight of Agrippina, but with Messalina they were in close alliance. Narcissus, Pallas, and Callistus, in particular, adhered to Messalina in their own selfish and mercenary interests.

The question of the right of citizenship came to the fore. Many wished to acquire the right of Roman citizenship for the sake of certain advantages and preferential treatment over foreigners ; they accordingly applied to Claudius, who was, however, incapable of deciding the cases submitted to him.

In Rome the right of citizenship had formerly cost a considerable sum. Claudius dealt indiscriminately with the applications for enrolment in the list of citizens. The freedmen immediately perceived this, and realized that it would pay to take matters into their own hands ; for after all, the forgetful Claudius never knew whether he had signed a given application or not. However, to protect themselves in their schemes the freedmen took Messalina into their confidence ; they then proceeded in concert with Messalina to sell patents of citizenship and went shares in the profits. They pushed matters to such lengths that the right of citizenship fell lower and lower in value and price, until it became a household word that " one could become a citizen for a few bits of broken glass ". Claudius had to bear the odium of these practices on the part of his ministers.

When their transactions in the distribution of the right of citizenship ceased to flourish, the freedmen-cum-Messalina syndicate negotiated and sold military commands, administrations, governorships—all without exception posts which were immensely lucrative to their incumbents and therefore commanded a high selling price.

The receivers were as rapacious as the donors. Governors in the provinces were high-handed and despotic, levied taxes at will, were extortionate, and frequently even did not shrink from theft, robbery, and pillage of the property of private persons, communities, and temples.

Were there no other means of abusing the protection of the government to obtain money in abundance? Many more, but one in particular. In their cupidity the court-syndicate conceived the idea of placing a monopoly upon certain goods. It is certain that this practice yielded incalculable profits. Consequently everything rose in price and there was a public outcry. The mystified Claudius, who did not know the reason for the enormous rises in price, although it was to be found in his own house, summoned the people to an assembly in the Campus Martius where, from a tribune, he fixed the prices of these commodities.

The inward merriment of the four, while they listened to Claudius speaking from the tribune as their helper in need, can well be imagined, as also can that of the three cunning freedmen among themselves over their accomplice, the reckless Messalina.

Thus Messalina allowed herself to be drawn ever more securely into the meshes of the ministers' net and emulated their lawless methods of acquiring wealth.

Each of the three heads of the Claudian court, Narcissus, Pallas, and Callistus, was attached to Messalina by common interests which developed into physical intimacy.

Claudius remained the dupe. He was timorous and full of misgiving. He trembled at the thought of losing his wife. And he was so fond of governing! So fond of pronouncing death sentences, of gloating over the sight of the victim and the spectacle of the execution, while making a hearty breakfast or an enormous lunch.

Sadism was in his blood. He would listen with rapt attention to the harrowing evidence in a murder case, and could scarcely contain himself till the moment came for him to pronounce the death sentence, whereupon the execution was carried out in his presence forthwith. One day, on an excursion from Rome to the Tiber, where the wonderful landscape lay bathed in sunshine, he was suddenly overcome by the desire to see an execution. Among other criminals, a parricide happened to be available. A parricide? Such men had formerly been "clapped naked into the pillory and there beaten to death with rods". He instantly sent for the criminal and had him bound to a stake; as no executioner was at hand, he dispatched messengers to Rome to fetch one. How many hours the condemned man, bound hand and foot, had to wait! Claudius stood by and waited at the place of execution until the evening, when the executioner came. Claudius witnessed the torture and was content.

He revelled in scenes of blood. Whenever a warrior fell to the ground in the gladiatorial games at the circus, he rose from his seat, went into the arena, had the prostrate man done to death, and feasted on the sight; he wanted to watch the dying man's expression.

On one of these occasions it happened that owing to the severity of their wounds two warriors collapsed together. He forthwith ordered the swords of the fallen men to be made into knives for his own personal use.

The promise of slaughter at the circus was frequently not enough for him. So he would hastily find a reason to condemn one of the technical staff of the theatre to death when some part of the mechanism failed to work satisfactorily. Another time, without further ado, he sent the conductor who accompanied him on his walks into the arena to fight for his life.

Claudius' bloodthirstiness and fear for his throne, coupled with his mistrust, were well-known to all at court, including Messalina and the freedmen. Accordingly, they arranged one day for an unprecedented scene which, at the outlay of a few theatrical gestures and words, was to bring them in a vast amount of money and goods to take place in the presence of the sadistic poltroon ; Claudius' fears and lust for blood were to do the rest.

Claudius was so obsessed by the tyrant's dread, that he never attended a banquet without having " a ring of prætorian guards with lances round him and soldiers as attendants ". " Moreover, he never visited a sick man without first having the bedchamber, even to the mattresses and bedclothes, painstakingly and thoroughly searched ; indeed, in later days, he caused everyone, without exception, who desired audience of him to be most rigorously examined, before entering his presence, by inspectors specially appointed for the purpose."

The freedmen and Messalina had many a time been able to carry out their schemes by exploiting the Emperor's fears. When the weakling was approached from this angle, he would do all that was asked of him. He fell a prey to appalling terrors, and in his abject dread and pusillanimity, gave immediate orders for executions. When his mind had recovered from its emotional disturbance he tried to form a clear picture of what had happened, for he could not remember what orders he had given. In such cases he would hasten to visit the accused at his house. On learning that the person concerned was no longer alive but had fallen a victim to imperial justice and been beheaded, he would express his deep regret at the man's fate and remorse that he, Claudius, should have allowed himself in the heat of the moment to be carried away and pronounce judgment.

How many opportunities did those faithless servants, the freedmen, have of duping their master and Emperor, in pleading his forgetfulness ! How often, how often, did Messalina deceive her husband, how many times did she exploit his weakness, how freely did she abuse his great affection for her ! How easily did this gayest, most ardent of women, in displaying her charms to her debauchee of a husband, succeed in making him deaf and blind of soul ! Messalina never spoke of throne or succession but persistently followed her own bent for pursuing her excess in the backwaters of life.

It had never occurred to Messalina to style herself " Diva " (divine), like a Livia beside her divine Augustus. Never had she wished to be deified as Caligula had claimed for his sister-wife Drusilla. Messalina's place was in this world. She was a daughter of earth and meant to remain one. What could it avail Messalina that after her death men should swear by the godhead Messalina, as Caligula swore by the godhead Drusilla and ordered the people to do the same ?

Messalina's sole care was that her mortal husband should swear by her, and believe everything she told him.

What recked she, that after her death her statues in the curia should be of gold ? . . . Life is for the living !

Should she be throned in marble too, next to the marble goddess Venus, in full view in the temple of Venus ? Why not be Venus in life ?

Should men build temples to her, adorned with sacred statuary ? Her statues were men of flesh and blood.

Should they celebrate her birthday with great pomp, games, and a festal banquet for the Senate and the

Equestrian Order? She would celebrate her own festivals! Life is a perpetual festival. Should she be called Panthea in myth?

"Panthea?"—Messalina wonders, "am I not already Panthea?" Should a senator, as erstwhile Livius Geminius had done after Drusilla's funeral, affirm on oath after her cremation that he had seen her ascending to heaven? She would have her heaven on earth!

A man who had sold hot water in the period of national mourning for Drusilla was executed for *lèse-majesté* by order of Caligula.

Messalina laughed at such folly. She would have laughed too, had she known that one day Claudius would have coins struck with her effigy and the inscription "goddess", as Caligula had done for the departed Drussilla. Coins in her living hand was what she loved, this extravagant young woman, who knew the pungent stimulus of the senses and the thrill of rapture in wanton abandonment to voluptuous pleasures. Should she, like Cæsar, trace her family tree back to Venus? Whence she came was immaterial to Messalina; she was there; what did she care, whether she were a Julian descendant of Venus or a Claudian from the land of the Sabines? She was a Domitian, and had the invincible Domitian lust of life. Had Messalina desired apotheoses during her lifetime Claudius, at one glance from his blooming wife, would have been only too ready to gratify her wish. As it was, however, Messalina never appeared in the part of a demigoddess either at Claudius' side or above him.

Power?—No! Messalina took no interest in it. To taste the powers of life to the full was Messalina's instinct. True, she allowed the Senate, as Livia in her time had done, to present her, on behalf of the State, with a covered carriage for her consort's triumph. That was on the occasion when a part of

Britain had surrendered to the Roman Empire "without a blow being struck". For Messalina that was a festival of the living ; a lavish display of splendour in purple and gold, with masses of flowers and an array of strange men and beasts, hitherto unimagined ; they adorned life. On the State coaches were golden crowns, one seven pounds in weight, sent from Spain in token of allegiance to Rome, another of nine pounds of solid gold from "long-haired Gaul".

Then the drive through the streets of Rome, glorious in festal attire, when all eyes were riveted upon the fascinating woman in her radiant beauty !

A multitude of horse and foot in procession—gorgeous raiment, tunics embroidered with golden palm-leaves and with broad purple stripes—combined with many other sights to dazzle the eyes.

However, the entire pageant was not intended by Claudius for Messalina alone. He felt himself a conqueror, although everything in Britain had been settled without bloodshed. His palace was hung with enemy spoils and "on the pinnacle of his house on the Palatine hill he hung by the side of the civic crown a figure-head as a trophy of the ocean he had crossed and tamed by force". He actually did cross it, but he never tamed it. In the exuberance of his sense of conquest he allowed the freedmen, decorated like marshals, to participate in his triumph, and imagined himself a sovereign. Just as Claudius deluded himself into believing that he was a conqueror, so he was invariably deceived by others. He lied to himself and was told lies instead of the truth. Secretly, his little wife celebrated triumphs on her own account.

Open, ye ultimate recesses, wherever life may lurk !

Claudius sleeps. It is night. Calpurnia and Cleopatra, his favourite mistresses, have been whiling away his last waking hours over the wine cups. Now only his grey hair and thick bull-neck are to be seen. He is snoring in bed.

Where is Messalina?

"Come on, up and away! Hurray, girl! Come along."

The slave obeys.

"The old boy has got his nightcap on. How he loves his sleep! Let him sleep. Gently! Quick, girl! Come on!"

"Is that all right? Is it a good fit? What do you say to my wig? Does it suit me? A fair one—otherwise I'm always dark, you know. Do you think I shall be recognized? What if they do! Come on!"

She steals through the back doors leading out of the palace. Doorkeepers are always discreet when they feel money in the palms of their hands.

"This way! Look out! It's so steep. A stone! Oh, these flimsy shoes! If I were only there! I'm so excited! Is anyone following us? Look—down below there—do you see? The torches!"

Messalina reaches the Forum below. The great square with the medley of life. On high stools, in rows, naked women.

"I say, they've got to go! I'm here, I tell you! They shan't take a soul from me!

"Landlord! How much for a room?—There you are. Don't say a word. Give me a room. Quick! Oh, you know—open, I say."

Messalina throws off mantle and hood and stands naked as the harlots on the high stools before the brothels; climbs on to the stool; displays herself. "Hi! You! I like you. Come here!"

She has gilded her breasts. The gold on the bare skin gleams in the light of the torches.

"You!"

He comes. Who does?—A man . . .

Messalina in the cramped brothel-chamber. The bedclothes are still warm from the harlot and the man who have just left the room.

“ This is my room ! Here, you ! ”

“ Gone !—Next ? ”

Messalina is on the high stool again, playing with the gold on her breasts, joking and singing. “ Who's coming my way ? ”

The next, the third, the fourth, and so on—they all make for Lycisca ; that is the harlot's name Messalina has adopted.

“ What ! Going already ? ”

“ It's morning. We're putting out the torches,” says the landlord.

“ Oh dear ! How time flies ! Let me stay for a little while, do. There are still some men about—over there—and over there.”

“ Get out—the whole lot of you ! It's daytime.”

“ Where—where's my money ? ”

Hastily, Messalina rakes together the night's earnings and pockets them. She is now enveloped in her mantle. “ Ah, off with it ! ”—She rolls on her back on the floor.

“ Men ! Men ! ” . . .

She gets up, reeling.

“ Enough, my beauty ? ”

Messalina looks at the brothel-keeper. Her cheeks are streaked and blackened with smuts from the reek of the sooty lamp. She turns up the hood of her mantle in which she is now once more enveloped. The blond wig is hidden ; only her eyes are visible.

“ I still haven't had enough ! ”

“ Be off ! ”

“ I'm all on fire ! ”

Messalina looks round with a flickering gaze at the gaily-painted curtain hanging before the brothel. The harlot Lycisca's name is daubed on it.

On the other side of the curtain the landlord is still busy chasing away the rabble of the night : runaway slaves, watermen, thieves, a man with the blood of a murder, committed but an hour since, still on his clothes and thumb, executioners, gravediggers and, last of all, the castrated drum and fife player who, still twitching in every limb, his neck almost dislocated and his body all twisted, continues out-of-doors to go through the movements with which he has been accompanying his performance inside.

Back to the palace goes Messalina. Her mantle smells of soot and cheap perfume from the brothel.

The doorkeeper falls back. The money has done its work.

" Girl ! Wash me ! Prepare me for bed ! My husband will be here soon . . . "

Slowly and thoughtfully, Claudius pulls the nightcap off his head. Something has occurred to him. Was it a dream ? He does not know. " Now then, what was it I wanted ? Where's my stylus ? Calpurnia ? Aren't you there either, Cleopatra ? What on earth was it ? Dice !—I've got it ! Narcissus ! How must you play, so as to win, always win ? "

" Like this, Your Majesty."

" Right ! I knew it myself, didn't I ? I'll begin to-day to write my book."

" Which, Your Majesty ? "

" The one about how to play dice so that you always win . . ."

The three-man league, Narcissus, Pallas, Callistus knew of Messalina's doings. None of them, however, desired to be in her bad books, for it was in their interest to have her on their side, and besides, they feared her vengeance.

Surrounded by deference and submission and perpetually incited to all kinds of wild enterprises, Messalina soon came to regard herself as all-powerful. Her ardour communicated itself to all her feelings. Hatred and vindictiveness ultimately became as intensively developed in her as her affectionate and harmonious tendencies. She need deny herself nothing that her unbridled passions demanded.

In the palace, the rooms which her husband's predecessor Caligula had converted into a brothel were still untouched. A bevy of mistresses flitted about the house. It would have been strange had Messalina refrained from the tradition of inviting elegant women and offering them for commerce. Had she not the example before her of Julia, daughter of the Emperor Augustus ? She had had the slave Phoebe to share her love adventures with her. Did Messalina know that Augustus himself used to call his lady guests away from table to an adjoining room, bringing them back after a while with a somewhat changed demeanour so that all present came to the same conclusion concerning the nature of the interlude ? What was it that the poet Ovid had seen in Augustus' house ? Whom had he detected, and in what case, that he should be compelled by order of Augustus to spend the rest of his days far from Rome ?

Messalina everywhere. The licentious spirit of the Roman imperial palace was concentrated in Messalina. She conjured it up and made it subservient to her wildest caprice ; so frenzied at last that she herself became the mere tool of the sinister palace spirit.

The satanic triumvirate of the three most powerful freedmen turned the palace spirit to their own advantage. Messalina obeyed. There were offices and high places to be distributed. Who was to have them ?

This was a court where an unfettered Eros brandished his whip, overthrowing all who did not bend the knee to his sceptre. The rebel was chastised while he who willingly submitted was awarded the prize.

Messalina recommended the men who did her bidding ; the freedmen distributed the offices like so many prizes, and reaped their own share of the gain.

" In the presence of their husbands and before their very eyes, women were obliged to offer themselves for commerce. She loved and esteemed men of this stamp."

Messalina despised matrimony. She hated the state of thraldom, fought against it, and cast it aside. And what, indeed, was the good of her husband to her? She could not discern in him a man capable of inspiring his wife with respect. It was not customary in the imperial palace, or anywhere else in Rome, to observe the marriage laws of the state. From the time of Cæsar, who had planned the introduction of polygamy and who, despite his marriage, lived like a bachelor, nobody, down to her own day, had ever felt bound by the marriage laws.

If a man like Cæsar, the most influential person in the state, thought thus, why should not a woman, an Empress, adopt the same ideas? She "longed, within the framework of the law, to possess a number of husbands." Her daring erotic pastimes were all precursors of this thought. She set the pace, and kept a room in the palace for her private pleasures, which included "offering, like a brothel-keeper, the first women in Rome for sexual commerce". All the freedmen in the palace applauded the courageous lead given by the Empress.

She was courted and flattered on all hands—assuredly from selfish motives on the part of the sycophants. This, however, was lost upon the incorrigibly imprudent woman. The freedmen, especially the three arch-plotters—Callistus, the recipient of all petitions, Narcissus, the private secretary, and Pallas, the controller of the imperial privy purse—danced attendance upon the joyous Messalina and found all her court arrangements delightful. They celebrated their private festivals in the palace, at a time when the Emperor could not even organize a special festivity on the occasion of a grandchild's birth owing to a temporary insufficiency of funds; his worthy ministers were too extravagant and too festive. A host of admirers surrounded Messalina, the fiery, beautiful woman, whose favour was so easy to obtain and through whose friendship a man might so simply and quickly grow rich.

Lucius Vitellius, an upstart, desired at all costs to make himself *persona grata* at court and win the Emperor's favour. At every opportunity he hovered round the little Empress Messalina, beseeching her for his " Heaven on earth "—" would she deign to permit him to take off her shoes ? The sycophant thus managed to come by one of Messalina's little shoes—the right foot—bore it away with many genuflexions, kissing it passionately, and wore it thereafter between his upper and under garments ". And how often after that did he not kiss it in the course of the day !

The court sided with Messalina in preference to Claudius.

There was a certain Sabinus, whom Claudius had condemned to the gladiatorial contests, in which he was to meet with the " death he deserved ".

What did Messalina do ? The obsequious triumvirate advised her on the subject. The doomed Sabinus was, upon Messalina's intercession, dispensed by Claudius from the fight with death . . . She had previously granted him the favour of admittance to the number of her paramours.

So close was the bond of friendship between the ministers and Messalina that they could induce her to take any step which appeared agreeable and expedient to them. One freedman stood by the other.

What matter that the people murmured against Claudius because of the pardon ? The court-intrigue proceeded. No matter, either, that actors made covert references to the freedmen from the stage in the Emperor's presence. One of them once recited the well-known verse of the period :—

> " He who rises from hard knocks to affluence is insupportable."

Claudius' freedman Polybius, his literary adviser, upon whom all eyes in the audience were turned at these words, promptly retorted : " But the same poet also says, 'And many a goatherd has become a sovereign . . .'"

Claudius did not punish his freedman for this. Though brutally callous to others, summarily condemning them to death for trifles, he always protected his own out of egoism. He would have been lost without these *soi-disant* friends of his, and very well he knew it.

Shortly afterwards, in fact, several freedmen were reported to him as secretly plotting against his life. Claudius took their part, with the reply : "One doesn't defend oneself against a flea as against a wild beast." Did not a freedman quickly whisper this saying into Claudius' ear ?

These worthies were not only producers and stage-managers ; they were also excellent prompters. The entire management of the gruesome " Court Theatre " lay in their hands.

One day, when ordered to march against Britain, the soldiers refused to obey the Emperor. They " did not want to go beyond the limits of the known world ". They only yielded when Narcissus succeeded their commander-in-chief on the rostrum, but not because Narcissus persuaded them into the campaign. They kept up a continuous roar of " Ho !—the slave would play the master ! "—and prevented the freedman from making his voice heard. Narcissus was shrewd enough to hold his peace ; he grasped the situation at a glance and was satisfied. The soldiers marched off behind their leader out of opposition to Narcissus.

When the chosen path turns out to be impassable, we take another. In one way or another the freedmen invariably attained their ends.

At all events, these Greeks were keen students of human nature and knew to perfection how to exploit human weaknesses, folly, vanity, coquetry, and lust. Moreover, at heart, they had never recovered from the pain inflicted on them by Rome in the destruction of their native land and civilization, welfare, and happiness. It rings like a tale of vengeance handed down from ancestral days when we observe the conduct of these Greek freedmen who, as free men, were abducted from their native land and homes and sold in slavery . . . To treat the overlord of the Roman Empire as a puppet with the connivance of the Empress—herself a Roman—must have afforded them a certain cynical amusement.

The imperial palace, and all its inmates, witnessed the maddest escapades. Claudius alone saw and heard nothing. A couple of abigails sufficed to ensure a happy ending to everything the organizers had in view. Messalina made arrangements for some of her pretty little handmaids to sleep near her husband whenever a sexual orgy was in progress in the palace. They were Messalina's inconspicuous but most loyal pickets. They bore no daggers and made no veiled denunciations, otherwise Claudius would have taken fright.

But the little band of Messalina's " body-guard " kept good watch. The girls feigned sleep ; but they listened with sharp ears to all that was said in Claudius' room, to hear if anybody was with him—betraying a secret, warning the Emperor, or mentioning Messalina's name. Should this be the case they sped to their mistress, who rewarded them handsomely and promised them one or two dashing young fellows as well.

Did she learn that this or that man was a traitor he had barely another day to live. Nay, that very hour he went to his death, with nobody any the wiser . . .

Catonius Justus, prefect of the prætorian guard, attempts to enlighten his Emperor. He finds the state of affairs in his master's house unseemly . . . an Emperor's honour and repute sullied by his wife—it is too much for an honourable man to bear. He knows his duty. He goes to the Emperor, who will be alone now, the Empress is once more revelling in orgies of passion and dragging many others with her into the mire.

He approaches the Emperor's apartments. He does not see the girls or, if he does, he ignores them. One is sleeping so innocently in a little room through which he passes, another in a corridor. As if the palace had not enough room for its men-servants and maid-servants ! Between the curtains before a wide communicating doorway sleeps yet another. How many sleepers there are ! Yet none is alseep. The little girl-guard of the young Empress is more alert than the great prætorian with his three thousand guardsmen. Up ! Quick ! The first is out of the bed that Justus passed. Up ! The second . . . Catonius Justus does not even reach the Emperor's room. The girls have already reported what is about to happen . . . Justus does not return, either. Catonius Justus disappears without leaving a trace behind. The girl-guard sleeps on, or rather, does not sleep, but waits to see if another comes.

The Emperor has to appoint a new commander for his body-guard. The spectre continues to haunt the imperial palace in Rome. Whosoever approaches it, whomsoever it seizes, is doomed, one way or another.

The handsome Mnester, the favourite of both sexes among theatre-goers, has not appeared in public for some time. " Handsome Mnester who used to play the part of the robber captain so splendidly ? "

" We want our Mnester back ! "

" Perhaps he is only playing with us and keeping us in suspense."

People recalled that their beloved and adored star, Mnester, had once already, in spite of all the calls, absented himself from the stage for a lengthy period. Also that Mnester, at a play which was a favourite with the audience, could not be induced to appear despite a thousand entreaties, but had ultimately surprised and convulsed them all by merely popping his head through the curtain in response to the persistent calls with the excuse that he had no time, as he was engaged on a work of love.

The audience wanted to see Mnester as Laureolus. It was smitten with a sudden passion for drama having street-robbers and murder as its theme. With what realism had Mnester always acted the part of Laureolus, that runaway slave, robber, parricide, slayer of his masters, desecrator of temples, incendiary! Of course, this was only the play, and harmless: not like the genuine article at the circus when the criminal "was torn to pieces by a bear and crucified before the eyes of the people, as a spectacle".

Mnester was now playing Laureolus at the theatre—the poet Catullus has made a play out of the actual episode—so naturally and convincingly that Rome could not see enough of it. Ugh!—how Mnester collapsed every time, vomiting streams of blood all over the stage, simply flooding it!

"We want our Mnester back!" demanded the audience.

The actors at the State theatre were paid by the State and were under its authority.

There were mutterings. They sent to the Emperor, but in vain. They pressed Claudius hard. The Emperor protested that he did not know where Mnester was. The audience, meaning all Rome, grumbled. Claudius found excuses for Mnester, "took his oath that *he* had not got him." It was not Claudius who had him: that was true. Mnester was being detained by Messalina. The handsome man, with his histrionic heroics, had captured her too. She would not release him, let the people sulk as they would. Now, however, they were really angry, because Claudius and he alone was the only one who was actually ignorant of what was going on in his own house, when even beyond the confines of the Roman Empire, where enemies still dwelt, people knew perfectly well that Messalina was keeping the State actor a prisoner at her side in the imperial palace.

Mnester rebelled against his imprisonment. He wanted to return to the stage : he belonged to the theatre, and longed once more to hear the applause and feel intoxicated by the enthusiasm of the audience.

All Messalina's blandishments, promises, gifts, could not induce Mnester to approach her. She had statues cast of him—he should have them, if he yielded to her.

How ingenious ! From coins bearing the effigy of the Emperor Caligula, which the Senate called in and had melted down, metal Mnester-images and statues now came into being. This was to attract Mnester, who had been a great friend of Caligula. This also failed to move Mnester. He feared the good graces of this perilous beauty. Neither did threats help Messalina. At last Mnester's behaviour was too much for Messalina. She ran to her Claudius, complaining that Mnester would not obey her.

This was unpleasant hearing for Claudius. An actor would not obey the Empress ? She begged her husband to " order Mnester to show more deference to her wishes ". He did not guess the true significance of this, and merely thought that Mnester had been disobliging in some other respect. Claudius sent for Mnester and enjoined him " to submit to Messalina's every wish ". By her husband's express orders Mnester now slept with Claudius' wife. The imperial order admitted of no exception. Messalina made that point quite clear.

Another wall had been breached. Messalina would soon be in the boundless open, where there are no barriers, beyond space. After this she no longer consulted or asked her husband in such cases, behaving, whenever she desired a particular lover, " as if Claudius knew all about it and left her a free hand in these matters ".

What else ? Messalina plans and dreams of new conquests. Every man must be hers. If he will not come to her of his own free will, then let him be captured by enticement, cunning, authority. She surveys the scene as a garden stocked with all manner of tempting fruit ; she plucks, tastes, casts aside, tries other kinds . . . She hears of a high-spirited, handsome young man ; she must have him. She summons him, keeps him for one night, and orders him off the next morning with the injunction never to let her see him again. . . By way of a change she would consort with her own physician Vettius Valens, whom she adored.

Her rival Agrippina had all Messalina's " misdeeds " repeated to her ; for she kept many spies and eavesdroppers. Is it all true that Agrippina wrote about Messalina in her memoirs ? Who can tell ? Agrippina, who was for ever casting longing glances at Claudius, both for her own sake and for that of her son Nero and the Julian strain she desired to advance, certainly exaggerated a great deal. She could not reproach her adversary on the imperial throne with any sort of interference in the government of the State, so she attacked Messalina's private life instead. The historians of the age succeeding Messalina's all used Agrippina's memoirs and were biased by hearsay. And so the stories were enlarged and embroidered, and each successive chronicler illuminated the actual facts with the fire of his own erotic fantasy. Had circumstances been otherwise would Messalina have been able to maintain her position as Empress for seven years ? To be sure, Claudius was a fool, and the freedmen were crafty.

The following passage is a literal rendering of what Caius Plinius Secundus, a writer of Messalina's time—he died in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D., being caught and overwhelmed by a shower of red hot cinders—narrates in his "Natural History":

"Messalina, the wife of the Emperor Claudius, who regarded a success in sexual intercourse as a royal attribute, chose for this contest the most notorious of the public prostitutes and surpassed her; for within the space of twenty-four hours she cohabited twenty-five times." This was written by a man, among whose other statements is the following: "Mice are the most prolific of all creatures; however, nothing absolutely credible can be said on this subject, even when we take the evidence of Aristotle and the soldiers of Alexander the Great into account. Their fertilization is said to be effected by licking and not by covering; a single mouse is said to have had a litter of one hundred and twenty young, while in Persia mice were found pregnant while yet in the womb. They are also supposed to become pregnant from gnawing salt . . . Among the oviparous quadrupeds, the lizard is generally believed to give birth through the mouth, although Aristotle denies this. These animals do not brood; indeed, they forget, owing to their lack of the faculty of memory, where they have laid their eggs, and consequently the young break through of their own accord."

One who relies on hearsay in matters calling for the minutest observation, such as natural science, and thereby arrives at all sorts of naïve and grotesque conclusions, can surely not be relied upon for accuracy in historical matters.

However, Messalina's match with the prostitute, if perhaps not true, is cleverly invented and characteristic of the age in which she lived. Sensationalism and gossip seized upon everything which leaked out of the palace through the medium of the scandalmongers.

The ministers advised Messalina, in order to secure her position, always to have plenty of funds available so that she, like Agrippina, might muster a party and thus be able to count upon well-paid friends should anything ever reach the Emperor's ears. In giving her counsel the gentlemen were thinking of themselves as well.

It was not for the sake of extravagance that Messalina required so much money, her desire for which arose from the need of making people submit to her will. In Rome every assent and dissent was to be bought. The highest bidder could command the best friends.

The freedmen were always ready and able to advise Messalina.

She should devote more attention to the conduct of rich men, the freedmen told her : how easily, in a corrupt city like Rome, might not some ground for an indictment be found ? Claudius would believe whatever he was told ; a slave to her charms, he could and would condemn whenever he heard the sweet voice of his wife. The prosecutor, Her Majesty the Empress, would then receive adequate compensation from the confiscated property of the departed victim of justice.

With increasing speed, as though drawn by ever stronger magnetic waves, Messalina was swept along without a pause towards her shoreless sea.

However, there was somebody who, if he turned, might well cherish the hostile design of damaging Messalina's relations with Claudius before the great blow was struck, and must first be removed from her path. True, nothing much had so far been heard about him ; he lived in retirement, was "peace-loving", only "occupied himself with his own affairs", and stayed away from court. But he was suspect, for he was the husband of the younger Julia, who had been so severely punished by Claudius at Messalina's instigation, and finally put to death. He might rise up in vengeance, if the bloody deeds at court ever came to light. She would win this man for one night, and then, as with a debtor, she would have nothing more to fear from him. But Vinicius avoided her embraces. He partook of a poisoned meal, and died.

Messalina knew of it ; it was she who had ordered Vinicius' end. The obtuse Claudius gave Vinicius a public funeral, as befitted a person of rank, and pronounced a panegyric of the dead man's life and deeds.

What was the attitude of Messalina's mother towards her daughter's conduct ? She had little cause to reproach her ; on the score of lovers she was her equal. Her husband, Marcus Valerius Messala Barbatus, after whom their little daughter Valeria Messalina was named, had died. His widow Domitia Lepida set about finding a new husband. Recommended by Claudius, her choice fell upon Caius Appius Silanus, a member of one " of the most illustrious families in Rome". Claudius had already appointed Silanus to a governorship in Spain, a post which carried an enormous revenue. He was well-disposed towards Silanus, thought highly of him, and always acted as though Silanus were particularly valuable as an adviser and supporter in his plans. Indeed, Silanus was for some time Claudius' dearest friend.

Yet whoever stayed overlong at court was soon drawn into the net of rapacity and self-seeking and entangled therein. Inevitably Narcissus, who was jealous of his influence over the Emperor, one day felt himself superseded by Silanus. He promptly set an intrigue on foot. Jealous of his position of supremacy, which he believed to be threatened by Silanus, he immediately turned to Messalina, demanding her help.

He contrived to effect a *rapprochement* between the woman, infatuated by his flattery, and her stepfather Silanus.

Something unique in the daily round of erotic sensation. Every night the daughter was to caress the man who slept at her mother's side ! Silanus was horrified, and vigorously repulsed his step-daughter's advances.

Narcissus now had a foundation for enlisting Messalina's aid in restoring his wounded prestige. The two concocted a plan, such a clumsy one that nobody but Claudius could have failed to see through it. But Narcissus and Messalina know their Claudius.

It is early morning—before daybreak. Claudius is still in bed.

Suddenly, like one demented, Narcissus dashes up to the Emperor's bed. Claudius starts up : " What is it ? "—shaking with fear, he gropes at the bed-clothes.

" I dreamt . . . " begins Narcissus, and at that moment Messalina hurries into the bedchamber, holding her head as though in an effort to regain her self-control.

" Wh-wh-what ? "—stammers Claudius. In his quivering agitation, the saliva trickles out of the corners of his mouth.

Narcissus shudders and quakes : " I've seen you in a dream dying by Silanus' hand ! "

" So have I ! "—chimes in Messalina. " Just think, I've had the very same dream for nights ! " In the most gruesome colours, Messalina depicts to the panic-stricken Claudius the scene of her dreams, in which Silanus murders him.

" Mur-mur-murderer ? "—Claudius is beside himself.

A slave enters with the announcement that Appius Silanus is on his way, hastening towards the palace. The two plotters had arranged the whole affair. Silanus does indeed arrive at the palace still before daybreak. That, too, was pre-arranged ; he had been requested the day before to arrive at that time. To the silly superstitious Claudius everything was clear. Silanus' arrival convinced him that the dream-vision of the two was a warning of fate. He immediately gave the order : " Arrest Silanus and execute him ! "

The next day Claudius hastened to the Senate and gave a detailed account of the episode, expressing before the whole assembly his heartfelt thanks to Narcissus, the astute freedman. " For," said Claudius, " he, Narcissus, watches over my safety, even in his sleep."

The freedmen and Messalina were thus free to pursue their audacious courses. Even Polybius, the court philosopher and literary adviser to the Emperor Claudius, another freedman and Greek, allied himself to Messalina—if not perhaps to the same extent as Narcissus, Pallas, and Callistus in the common pursuit of amassing wealth, yet at least in surrender to her amorous attractions.

Polybius was attached to the sanctimonious Seneca, the philosopher whose moral pronouncements Messalina could not endure. Possibly Polybius and Seneca may now and then have exchanged a well-meant word or so, wondering whether Messalina ought not to be warned that she herself might some day have to pay the penalty for her hazardous escapades and all too high-handed conduct. Did Polybius, a friend of the younger Julia, brought to her downfall by Messalina, and who was also on good terms with Agrippina, bring himself, with mingled feelings of friendship and faint malice—to make tactful representations to Messalina ? At any rate, Messalina went to Claudius one day and accused Polybius of " slander ". This woman of violent impulses actually succeeded in having Polybius condemned to death.

Now, however, the three omnipotent ones, Narcissus, Pallas, Callistus, put their heads together. They were uneasy and trusted the Empress no longer. They remained the perfect courtiers, but the Messalina alliance was at an end. From that hour onward Messalina was alone.

VI

MARRIAGE

Eros goes hunting through the streets and startles the people.

"What is it? I am so afraid," says one; another seeks the swift huntsman and runs to overtake him; he has not understood the purpose of the instinct; in running he trips. One becomes restless, another eagerly curious to see the god who lashed him standing naked before him. Yet another longs to meet men who will tell him what Eros is; one did not recognize him, another sees in him a creator, another a tormentor, a torturer, a slayer.

Eros hunts on, on, and ever on.

The people are lashed together into a vortex, while Eros brandishes the whip that makes the vortex whirl perpetually.

What is it? It there no end? No man can contemplate it. Eros continues to play with his top. The people crowd together, repulse one another, embrace, wound, hurt each other; laughing, weeping, exulting, sobbing—and call it pleasure.

Eros looks on; waiting to see if anyone understands . . .

Valeria Messalina does not yet know how the associates, instigators, accomplices of her vagaries will behave towards her. The freedmen are wise and conceal their intentions.

Messalina is careless as a child; untroubled by scruples, knowing no danger, knowing nothing of morality, sure of her instincts. Nobody remonstrates with her. If no freedman is available as accomplice, another will serve.

She counts upon Lucius Vitellius, her great admirer, who stands in high repute with her husband Claudius, and once even represented the Emperor in Rome during his absence on the campaign against Britain. Vitellius, Messalina thinks, will sufficiently advance her interests with the Emperor.

Asiaticus owns the superb gardens of Lucullus, where the magnificent buildings stand ; the marble houses with their sumptuous decorations and fittings, the quantities of gold, ivory, and precious stones ; the colonnades, luxurious baths, gaming rooms, all belong to Asiaticus. Could Messalina but possess them all and realize her erotic day-dreams there !

The great blow, the attack upon Valerius Asiaticus, the richest of the rich, must be struck. Asiaticus often trembled for his riches, knowing the fate of the wealthy in Rome. The court seemed dangerous to him.

He had already been consul twice, only the rich being usually appointed to such an office. The consuls had to provide games at vast expense, and it was further incumbent upon them in the time of the Emperors to meet all kinds of other costly obligations.

Asiaticus did not wish to excite any envy and already intended " to waive his claims ". In order not to make yet more " enemies and opponents than he already had " through his position, he resigned office of his own accord. He valued his personal safety more than the great honour of being consul.

Messalina now touched the pedantic moralist Claudius in his nost sensitive spot. Claudius, the perpetual dupe in his own married life, was very fond of playing the strict censor in other people's matrimonial affairs. Messalina knew that.

" Asiaticus," said Messalina to Claudius, " has committed adultery with Poppæa Sabina, the most beautiful woman in Rome, wife of the Senator Scipio."

How vividly Messalina depicted to her husband this crime against matrimony! She certainly had a good choice of illustrations. Claudius was indignant at the news.

Asiaticus had no idea of what was impending against him in his absence. He was sitting peacefully at Baiæ, gazing at the blue sea and watching the activity of the sailing boats. His wealth permitted him to enjoy to the full the luxury of the celebrated watering place, far from Rome, where the rich man was not sure of his life.

As he let his eyes rove over the gulf, he may have been thinking of Caligula, the predecessor of his Emperor Claudius. The madman had raged there as he had in Rome. Asiaticus had often been filled with loathing for Caligula's atrocities.

Asiaticus smiles to himself as he gazes from Baiæ across to Bauli (Puteoli) on the opposite side of the bay. So it was there that Caligula, the fool, had performed his miracle!—There was the bridge, three thousand six hundred paces long, that stretched across the sea!

Caligula had summoned all the ships from far and near, and had them placed side by side in a double row and lashed together so that a path should lead across the sea. The ships were fetched from Egypt, Greece, Spain; what matter that living might be dearer in Rome because there were no longer any ships to bring grain to the capital—Caligula had ordered it!

The bridge had a freshwater main, seats, refreshment booths. It was supposed to look as though there were no sea beneath this street.

Asiaticus once more sees a vision of Caligula seated on a richly-caparisoned charger—as in reality he had been. The hero wears a gold-embroidered Greek riding-cape—Caligula himself asserted that it was the armour of Alexander the Great—over this a marshal's raiment of purple silk studded with gold and Indian jewels. He wears a Spanish leather breastplate, a wreath of oakleaves encircles his brow; his sword is slung at his side. Now follows the sally from Bauli over the bridge to the attack upon the town. Caligula tears with a host of horse and foot over the sea-bridge, storms Baiæ, " conquers " it, and rests—as though he had won a great victory.

The next day Caligula drives over the bridge in a gold-faced undergarment cut like the tunic of a circus charioteer, with the most famous racehorses harnessed to his car. There follows a quantity of superb trophies, representing the booty of the mock battle the day before; then came several hostages, who happened to be living in Rome, " such as a Darius of the dynasty of the Arsacidæ "; then the entire court in sumptuous carriages, and finally the officers and the rank and file. They feasted and drank all day and all night. " The natural setting was crescent-shaped so that the light fell on the scene as in a theatre, from all sides, and there was no darkness anywhere. The bridges and the surrounding hills were flooded in light."

What was the end of such imperial extravagance?

The multitude of visitors to Baiæ and assembled spectators were invited by the Emperor Caligula to view the bridge, then plunged headlong into the sea, those who " clung to the rudders of the ships being pushed back with poles and oars into the water ". He embarked upon a drunken cruise by night in a " beaked ship " and with his own hands threw his boon companions into the sea.

As Asiaticus lived all this over again in his memories, he recalled the uproar which had arisen in the palace after Caligula's assassination, when the people cried out in mockery: " Will you say again that we should all have only one throat?—We have many hands but only one throat! "

Again he saw before him the prætorian guard racing about in all directions in search of the murderers, eager to cut down anyone who came in their way and shrieking in vindication of tyranny : " Who killed the Emperor, who was it ? "

To avert a panic it had occurred to Asiaticus—and he rejoiced in the thought here in Baiæ as he had then done in Rome—to calm the excited mob and nonplus the soldiers simultaneously. " He stood up in a prominent place " and exclaimed " Why did not I have the good fortune to kill him ? "

Asiaticus, in his beautiful Baiæ, never dreamt that the time had now come when his words against the murdered Emperor were to be put to the test in the case of another royal fool.

By this time Crispinus, the prefect of the prætorian guard, was approaching with a troop of soldiers. Claudius had sent him off with the utmost dispatch, as if it were a question of suppressing a military rising without loss of time.

All this for the sake of a single man, Asiaticus. . . . The prætorian guard was to seek him out wherever he might be. Asiaticus must be brought forthwith to Rome, to the Emperor. The freedman's nightmare still haunted Claudius.

In exquisite Baiæ, with its serene, warm, sunlit air and the soothing beauty of the sea, Asiaticus was apprehended by the soldiers, fettered, and haled to Rome.

At home Claudius went about in mortal fear, waddling on his weak legs from one room to another. His friends were compelled to keep him company. From time to time he flew into a passion, foaming at the mouth and running at the nose. He stammered unintelligible words. His head throbbed and trembled.

Now comes the report that the prætorians have taken Asiaticus captive.

The trial of the falsely accused man was to take place immediately with as little publicity as possible. Claudius might otherwise be induced to change his mind. The prosecution itself, however, should be conducted with the full weight of forensic eloquence.

Consequently the Senate was completely excluded from the whole affair.

Everything was worked out and prepared in the minutest detail by plotters and forgers. The unsuspecting Asiaticus was to be flung straight into the welcoming arms of the octopus, from which there is no escape ; the process of crushing the accused might then immediately ensue.

Suillius, a professional informer, was chosen to deliver the first blow, and Sosibius, tutor of Britannicus, the little son of Claudius and Messalina, would follow.

Sosibius who, as tutor of the little Britannicus, stood high in the esteem of Father Claudius and enjoyed his entire confidence, had even before the trial of the accused Asiaticus assumed by arrangement an air of the utmost devotion, thus completely winning the heart of that ready dupe, Claudius.

Therefore the Emperor believed this liar implicitly and lent a willing ear to everything he said.

No sooner did a man become rich and powerful than Sosibius persuaded the Emperor that he was a danger to the sovereign. Let Claudius just recall the part played by Asiaticus after Caligula's assassination —Had not Asiaticus, urged Sosibius, cried out in the presence of the soldiers and the people : " Why did not I have the good fortune to kill Caligula ? "

Claudius had quite forgotten that it was the murdered Caligula who had once had him thrown into the Rhine, declaring on a later occasion that he had only spared his life in order to have somebody of whom to make fun.

Sosibius further persuaded the ineffectual Emperor that a man like Asiaticus, who publicly upheld an evil deed, must himself be an evildoer. Indeed, Sosibius declared, it was certain that Asiaticus had been the ringleader of the plot to murder the Emperor. A man of such a ruthless disposition was bound to be a danger to any other Emperor. " I happen to know that Asiaticus proposes to pay a visit to the German armies. How easy it would be for him to make himself popular there ! He comes from Vienna, you know, the citadel of the Celtic nobles, who are all his friends. Vienna is fortified. There he will entrench himself and proceed to stir up his clansmen."

" Measureless, as from the bellows' cavernous recess, the lies flowed forth from him." Claudius, whose mental deficiency constantly manifested itself in the dread of losing his throne, believed every word of this fantastic invention, which was aimed at the downfall of Asiaticus.

Yet all Asiaticus asked was to be allowed to enjoy his life in peace in the magnificent gardens of Lucullus, now his own, to the beauty of which he had so greatly added ; and again at Baiæ, where heart and mind are refreshed by the glories of nature, and happy, careless folk enjoy life to the full.

The accused Asiaticus is led into a room, where he finds Claudius, the Emperor, the informers Suillius and Sosibius ; also the Empress Messalina, courtiers, and witnesses. The trial begins.

Suillius parodies the public prosecutor and charges the accused with his crimes :

" Valerius Asiaticus, in his own ambitious interests, has corrupted the soldiers . . ." alienated them from their allegiance to the Emperor and . . . " by bribery and moral contamination involved them in all manner of shameful vices . . ." The accused has been guilty of criminal conduct with Poppæa Sabina, the wife of the senator Scipio, and committed adultery with her. Furthermore, the accused Asiaticus has . . . " exposed his own body to dishonour . . ."

In silence Asiaticus listened to this calumny, but at the last item he found his tongue and cried indignantly : " Ask your sons, Suillius ! They will have to admit that I am a man ! "

Claudius was amazed at this counter-attack, which exposed Suillius' sons and exonerated the accused.

Suillius made no reply.

The witnesses against Asiaticus were called. The accused maintained that he did not know a single one of them. A soldier, who alleged that he had served under him, was called in to identify Asiaticus among those present. The soldier looked round and then pointed at a bald head which happened to be in evidence, this being the only distinguishing feature that the soldier could recognize. There was a general laugh, and Claudius was for breaking off the trial on the spot and acquitting the prisoner.

Asiaticus began his defence, speaking so fearlessly and convincingly that Claudius was overcome by an emotion he had never known before. The man's sincerity moved him deeply.

Word for word, Messalina followed the speech made by Asiaticus in his defence. She felt as though she must choke. She scarcely ventured to look round, so profoundly was she affected by the words of the accused.

Messalina burst into tears and left the room. As ill-luck would have it, she went straight into the presence of Vitellius in the antechamber ; that arch-flatterer still carried her " sweet little slipper " against his heart.

Messalina, seeking peace for her soul, fell into the hands of the sycophant. With what hypocritical and lying phrases must he have consoled and cheered her, inspiring her with courage and spurring her on to abandon misplaced sympathy and hold strictly to her purpose.

Why did Messalina weep ? She was alone, without the freedmen, rid of their influence.

Was it remorse that overcame Messalina, who had never yet heard a man like Asiaticus in whose defence were expressed the principles governing his life?

Did Messalina realize that she was dependent on cowards? Did the thought distress her? Did she pity Asiaticus? Or did she sympathize with him?

Messalina was in a delicate position. Should she follow the genuine impulse of her heart, she would be ruined in another direction.

Vitellius was still with her in the antechamber; he succeeded in restoring the old atmosphere, and Messalina, now that Asiaticus was out of sight, begged him "not to let the accused slip through his fingers". Something must be done if Messalina were not to be shown up in the eyes of the world, even if she were in the wrong. For Claudius was wavering as regards the guilt of the accused.

Messalina relapses into the old atmosphere of intrigue which she has been breathing ever since she became Empress.

If only Poppæa would confess to the charge of adultery which Asiaticus had so triumphantly refuted! Then Messalina's cause would be vindicated by appearances.

She swiftly dispatched messengers to Poppæa, to depict to her in lurid colours the horrors of the dungeon to which as a convicted adulteress she would have to submit. Convulsed with agitation, dread and apprehension, Poppæa committed suicide on the spot.

Claudius was told nothing of what had passed between Vitellius and Messalina. Did he know anything about it at all? A few days after the trial, Claudius invited Scipio, Poppæa's husband, to dine with him. Scipio arrived alone, whereupon Claudius asked him why he had come without his wife. "She is dead," replied the coward.

The Emperor was still undecided whether to condemn Asiaticus or not. He had listened to the eloquence of the plaintiffs and been profoundly moved by the representatives of the defendant. He thought the matter over, a process which generally took some time with Claudius. This was turned to account by Vitellius, the servile courtier, who began steadily to increase his influence over Claudius.

While Claudius was considering the question of acquittal, Vitellius approached Asiaticus. He had tears in his eyes and, weeping, reminded Asiaticus of their former friendship, reviving memories of the old days when they both, Vitellius and Asiaticus, were wont with one accord to honour Claudius' mother, that good woman the Princess Antonia. He spoke of the distinguished services which he, Asiaticus, had rendered the State, well-nigh breaking into a panegyric of Asiaticus as he descanted upon his successes in the recent campaign against Britain—and then, when he had concluded all his theatrical parodies, he tearfully and graciously left Asiaticus the choice of his mode of death, as though the verdict "guilty" had already been pronounced.

Claudius was on the point of arriving at a decision which in all probability would have been "not guilty"—the acquittal being already on the tip of his tongue—when he overheard Vitellius' last words and, like an echo of their treachery, the same words fell from his own lips.

The Emperor, who was devoid of judgment, concluded that Vitellius had been appealing to Asiaticus' conscience, that the latter had just confessed, and that Vitellius, out of pity for the accused, had granted him a free hand in the choice of his death. He failed to see through the perfidious Vitellius, and had not heard what he had been saying to Asiaticus beforehand.

Thus Asiaticus was sentenced to death. All the Court flatterers now surrounded Asiaticus, congratulating him upon this mild sentence. Some of them were even base enough to advise him, in the friendliest manner, to choose starvation as an easy way of dying.

Asiaticus drew himself up to his full height and, telling the servile crew that he " made them a present of their charity ", he left them.

At home he gave orders for the erection of a pyre for his body, inspected it, found that in the position where it had been placed the canopy of the trees would suffer overmuch and accordingly had it removed to another spot.

Asiaticus behaved with perfect calm. " He performed his customary physical exercises, bathed and went cheerfully to table."

" It would have been more honourable for me to lose my life through an Emperor's cunning or wrath," said he, " than to fall, as I do now, through a woman's treachery and Vitellius' shameless mouth."

Then he opened his veins.

The trial did not end with this fraudulently farcical judgment of Asiaticus, it continued. The accusers expected special emoluments in money and in honours. For this purpose the senators were now convoked. At an earlier stage their presence might have altered the course of the case. To achieve their main object the conspirators had only needed falsehood and intrigue, but now when it was a question of voting funds the senators were necessary.

Two " illustrious Roman knights of the name of Petra " were implicated by Suillius in the trial. The two brothers, so the accusation ran, had placed their house at the disposal of Poppæa and the well-known dancer and actor, Mnester, for their assignations.

This was sufficient to ensure sentence of death for the brothers Petra. Claudius had, indeed, a special reason for pronouncing this sentence. It had been bruited abroad that one of the brothers Petra had had a most ominous dream. The witnesses gave different versions of the dream attributed to the one brother. Some said that Petra in his dream " had seen Claudius wearing a wreath of wheat stalks with the ears pointing backwards ", and that he had " prophesied lean years from this vision ". Others deposed, in their account of the dream laid to Petra's charge, that " it was a vine wreath with yellow leaves which he had seen and interpreted to forebode the death of the Emperor when the autumn came ".

So much is certain : Claudius' reason for his sentence was this dream, which proved the undoing of the two brothers.

Suillius had made an exhaustive search for witnesses to testify to the dream. He somehow found them ; he had to find them to secure a conviction which would bring him in a considerable sum of money ; for by the conviction and execution of such visionaries he would be destroying the Emperor's enemies. He knew, like everyone else, of Claudius' overpowering dread of assassination and losing his throne.

The informer was not mistaken. Immediately after the sentence, flatterers of the Emperor opened their hands and purses and rewarded the informers. The prefect of the bodyguard, Crispinus, who had arrested Asiaticus at Baiæ, was awarded one million five hundred thousand sesterces and the distinction of a high office in the state. This was the reason why the co-operation of the Senate was enlisted at the conclusion of the trial.

The lickspittle Vitellius insisted on another million for Sosibius, tutor of princes to the imperial family, " since he was so useful by reason of the good precepts he instilled into the prince Britannicus, and his good counsel to Claudius." Vitellius could not have behaved in worse taste. But he knew whom he had to deal with, where he was, and what he wanted. His every action was calculated to further his own interests. Later on, together with Claudius, he was twice made consul and awarded other distinctions, too. After his death, the Senate erected a statue to him in the Forum with the inscription : " Steadfast and true to the Emperor."

After the sentences had been pronounced, the question of Poppæa was discussed. Presently it was the turn of Scipio, the husband of the beautiful Poppæa Sabina, to express his opinion. What did he say ?—" Since I think as everybody does of Poppæa's crime, you may be sure that I also speak of it like everybody else "—truly " a masterly blend of marital love and senatorial duty."

Were there only tyrants, then, and base flatterers left in Rome ? One afraid of the other ?

Incompetency occupies the imperial throne. Round it squirm calculation, cunning, treachery, lies. The whole is actuated by the lust for money and power. " Eros brandishes the whip and makes the vortex whirl perpetually."

There are no standards, no fixed point around which life might revolve. The goal is never aught but a means and it is constantly changing. Will the circle never close ? Does nobody realize that the life forces are being degraded into machines ? Rome is a madhouse of orgiastic, raging lust. Eros' whip drives the living to destruction. Atoms of life fluttered after a craving, they are called pain and torment. The age is masculine—individualistic, with no trend towards union.

In Rome man has wasted his substance and thereby impeded the organic structure of life. The masculine system spares nothing. It drags woman into its sphere and strangles her will to live.

The idea of might which in Rome's little citizen republic had gained allegiance by the strictest devotion to duty, reached a climax under imperial rule ; but already it was proving untrue to life and had to resort to other means of self-preservation. Men of the stamp of a Suillius and a Vitellius were now necessary to uphold this might by artificial means.

Messalina had long known that there were no men left in Rome. The tears that the defence of Asiaticus wrung from her very soul expressed it clearly. Lay figures surrounded Messalina—one man a coward like the next. He is the tyrant who best knows among cowards how to conceal his own cowardice. Nobody dares to contradict when the other has already drawn all eyes upon himself. When egoism has once successfully imposed itself it may take any liberty.

Scarcely had Suillius attained his great *succès de scandale* in the indictment of Asiaticus than he began to feel that as a denouncer he would soon be all-powerful. He ransacked every possible source of material for accusations. His example attracted many others, who plucked up courage and imitated Suillius. The sumptuous reward which that wretch had received for his infamy tempted many to devote themselves to similar practices. Many, indeed, endeavoured to surpass Suillius in audacity.

All one had to do was to flatter the Emperor and success was assured. The Emperor had overridden the courts and the regular judges and, by virtue of his sovereignty, taken the administration of justice into his own hands and made it subject to his despotic will.

Thus the way was made easy for every kind of sharp practice. Plaintiffs and lawyers behaved worse than highwaymen. What had once been known as honour and decency no longer existed. "No public commodity was so venal as the perfidity of counsel." Whenever a man consulted an attorney in good faith, depositing with him an enormous sum to represent his interests before the court, he could rely upon losing his case and having a most disastrous judgment given against him the moment the adversary bribed that attorney with a still higher sum. Counsel specialized in such fraudulent modes of litigation.

A Roman knight of repute, Samius by name, gave Suillius four hundred thousand sesterces for the conduct of a certain case. Suillius, however, defrauded his client of the sum which he had deposited. Samius took the behaviour to his attorney so much to heart that he stabbed himself in the latter's very house.

The Senate, that degenerate company of the conservative nobles' party, was afraid of the people's representative, the Emperor, and held their peace.

At last a man raised his voice in the Senate, thundering against the rapacity, greed and dishonesty of plaintiffs and attorneys. Everyone was taken aback.

Who is this that shows no fear ? That he should dare to voice his convictions in public, in this perilous Rome where every man is lying in wait for an opportunity of turning a situation to selfish advantage ! Is there really in Rome a man who ventures to protest against the corrupt administration of justice and to appeal to right and conscience ? The Senate was petrified with amazement.

Caius Silius was the man who did not fear Rome ; he spoke from his heart with such sincerity that his words inflamed everyone. He demanded the reconsideration of the old Cincia law, now long discarded as inappropriate to decadent Rome, " whereby it had long been forbidden for anyone in the conduct of a lawsuit to accept money or gifts."

The dissolute Senate took heart of grace and insisted upon the observance of this law. Was Rome really going to rise from the morass into which it had been plunged by the lust for power and wealth ?

Head erect, Caius Silius faced them. Young and virile, Caius Silius kindled all hearts with his fiery spirit and infused a glad new hope into their life-blood. Next year he would be consul ; he had already been selected for and appointed to that office. What might not yet be expected of him ! This man, with his force of character, would save Rome from the infamy of its decline. He would arouse Rome from its spiritual lethargy.

Nobody gave utterance to his thoughts. The Emperor was present at the session.

How much there would be to reorganize! Many a senator must have cherished a secret store of wishes, which now promised to mature through Caius Silius' initiative when he became consul. Among so many others there was the odious problem of the women. Was there a single senator, a single citizen, whose wife did not betray him? A man who did not deceive his wife in word and deed? To many a man present this question, affecting him personally, must have been more important than the imminent prospect of war with King Mithridates of Parthia, who was making difficulties for the Roman armies.

Or—the whole Senate was on the alert—should Rome continue to wallow in the mire of degeneracy?

Suillius rose and attacked Caius Silius vehemently. Imperialistic egoism confronted the vigorous *esprit de corps* of a convinced republican who was all on fire for his own cause.

As accuser Caius Silius now faced the accuser Suillius. Suillius, who had been touched on his most sensitive spot—his purse—and his associate Cossitianus, made a tremendous noise . . . Oh, the futility of lies, when they are struck by the light of truth!

Silius did not lose his head. He felt a responsibility towards the Republic, whose consul he soon would be, and recognized the obligation. In ringing tones he replied to Suillius and his compeers:

"Have you and your kind ever known an orator who cared for much beyond the immortality of fame? They prized their art, they loved it, the art of free speech. Shall the finest of the arts be debased and dishonoured by abuse as has already happened with other arts?

" What have we left ?

" Honour is at stake when the art of oratory is measured by the greatness of the gain. Trustworthiness and loyalty become a dead letter once art is bartered for high reward.

" If it were customary to-day to conduct a case without anyone benefiting thereby, surely there would be scarcely one taken up out of a hundred. As it is, however, denunciation, exasperation, enmity, prejudice and petty annoyance are incessantly and intentionally magnified so that, just as the virulence and length of an illness are profitable to the physician, the pestilence of the Forum may bring in money.

" Who has not heard of the irreproachable Messala and Asinus, and latterly Arruntius and Aeserinus, who reached the loftiest heights and never sullied their art, the art of oratory ? "

" They had money enough already," vociferated Suillius, cutting the new consul short.

Suillius and his mercenary associates, representing the opposition, had by now perceived that the senators were all ranging themselves on the side of Caius Silius and were on the point of trying them under the law of restitution and meting out punishment. Nobody in the Senate contemplated a further examination, for their guilt was as clear as day ; Caius Silius had spoken all too convincingly.

And so with one accord the attorneys clustered round the Emperor, urging and insisting, protesting and imploring, all striving to obtain sanction for a new hearing. Claudius, at bay, gave his consent.

First one and then another of the injured worthies spoke, each had an argument to adduce against Caius Silius' speech :

" Who is so proud as to count in advance upon the immortality of his name ? Quite disinterestedly, and only when our services are required, do we try to help in order that no one may lose to the stronger party just for the lack of a legal representative. Did not we have to pay for our training in rhetoric? Have we not neglected our own domestic affairs entirely in order to devote our energies to the affairs of strangers? What about other people? Take a soldier, or a peasant: is there a single one among them who ever sets his hand to anything from which he does not expect to profit? Oh, it was easy for Messala and Asinius! They made their money in the wars between Augustus and Antonius. If we had been the heirs of rich families like Arruntius and Aeserinus, we too, as they did, could easily have played the magnanimous. And if we must cite examples, how did Publius Clodius and Caius Curio behave? They charged enough for their orations, surely! There is no lack of such instances. We, however, are not rich: we have only a modest fortune and are obliged, now that calm prevails in the State and there is no war, to seek the profit which is to be made in time of peace. Just think, O Cæsar, how can men of the people achieve anything unless they do as we do? Deprive the humble man of such possibilities and what is left?"

Unworthy as this speech was, the Emperor did not think it entirely unjustified. It was resolved that attorneys might no longer accept more than ten thousand sesterces; anything they demanded and received over and above that sum would have to be refunded under the restitution law.

The name of Caius Silius was on everybody's lips. He was the most widely-discussed man of the day. Was it not indeed unprecedented that Rome should produce a man imbued with humane ideals who was ready to make a public appeal to honour and decency?

To Messalina it was as though a curtain had been interposed between Now and Then. She could scarcely bear to contemplate the past. Was it really she who had burned with lust as man after man caressed her and she herself behaved like one demented in the man-hunt? How sordid it had all been! A sign, a glance, a word—and everyone was at her feet!

Here is a young man with a powerful mind and a brave heart. Now, for the first time life is really beginning. What does the past matter? What has seemed right and fair for years now revolts her.

Caius Silius is a man, so real in his humanity, so upright in his actions. Has Messalina ever met a man like this before? What could she be to him? What could she do for him? The past was entirely forgotten. This is just the time when Messalina's rival Agrippina is straining every nerve to ruin Messalina.

What matter? The Empress no longer sees herself as Empress: Messalina is a woman to whom the great love of a lifetime has come.

The whip of Eros falls from his hand; he strikes at a human heart, levelling, ordering, uniting.

Once before, while the trial of Asiaticus was running its harrowing course, Messalina had known those stirrings of the human heart, that feels for the fate of a fellow creature. But the servile Vitellius had interposed and straightway smothered the faint stirrings.

Yet now that Caius Silius, the man of the brave heart, had pervaded Messalina's being no number of Vitelliuses could forbid the Empress to follow the lead of Eros.

Her love for Caius Silius bordered " on madness ", they said in Rome, where Messalina's ardent love for Silius was by now generally known.

Messalina, who had hitherto sought her life's happiness in a constant variety of adventures, now had a set purpose. Her passionate love for this high-minded young man had gripped her, and it held her firmly. Her craving for new lovers had deserted her. This erring woman, ever fleeing from herself, had ever been a seeker, had come to herself, and found a home.

Messalina's trespasses were indictments because there was no one to fill the strong, uncontrolled yearnings of her heart ; indictments of man, who had forced woman to abuse her creative instincts and feelings ; indictments of the age, which refused to grant her the peace of mind to discover a life-rhythm of her own.

Out of the raving, annihilating turmoil around her Messalina now steers for a haven of refuge, which has been revealed to her. The scope and range of passion in her romantic soul, hitherto scattered in the pursuit of trivial enjoyment, now concentrated all its fire upon one single mighty image, which no longer showed Messalina as a victim of life ; she had become the sacrificer. All her beauty, all her pleasure should be for her beloved.

Love transforms avarice into lavish generosity. Jewels, choice gifts, keepsakes—all these things she sent to his house in quantities. Her own rooms in the palace were gradually emptied, while some objects from Claudius' treasure cabinets also found their way to her beloved. Now Caius Silius had in his house the things that were hers and hers alone. There she would see them all again when she came to him and enjoy his pleasure in them.

Junia Silana was the wife of this " handsomest of the young Roman knights ". She had to leave her husband and her home. Her husband separated from her for Messalina's sake. He himself was in ecstasy. Did he at first weigh the great risks to which intimacy with the Empress would expose him or consider the vengeance which would follow if he scorned the love offered him, he was nevertheless soon carried away by Messalina's love, so that he forgot the past and gave no thought to the future, abandoning himself entirely to the present.

A man who loved and sought the life that is passed remote from all disturbing intrigues, found the woman who was in love with him. She no longer visited him in secret, but accompanied by a great retinue, including the imperial slaves, in full imperial state.

Claudius meanwhile was completely ignorant of the march of events. He discharged the duties of his office of censor and, in stern proclamations, rebuked the laxity of the people at the theatres, and busied himself with the rectification of the alphabet.

Silius and Messalina. Wherever he is there she is too. If he goes out, she goes with him ; they make mutual appointments for walks and drives.

Rome is of opinion that an " exchange of pleasure " has already taken place. The high freedmen hold their peace . . . Claudius had eyes of his own ; why does he not open them ? But the freedmen now have many a talk with Agrippina. They have not forgotten that their countryman, the Greek Polybius, was violently rent from their midst.

To the conventional Caius Silius the fact that his companionship with Messalina was censured by Roman society was extremely painful. She was the Empress, the first lady. He knew her to be the object of mischievous attacks, and that distressed him. What could he do ? Should he tell her what his manhood and the dictates of chivalry towards a woman, what respect for the Empress commanded ?

He is enraptured, like the woman who cannot leave his side.

" Messalina, dearest, I can no longer listen to the way in which people misinterpret your love. Let us make an end of this pretence of Empress and her consort. My life is yours, come what may. Are we to wait until the Emperor dies ? "

Messalina listens in silence.

" Let us act honourably, as befits your love. Courageously and boldly—we have gone so far that nothing else will now avail. I am free and have no children. Messalina, say the word ; I will marry you. Do not fear, I will adopt your little boy."

Messalina listens in silence. Is her ecstatic imagination revelling in visions? She will have none of the marriage conditioned by the necessity for giving the State a successor to the Emperor. Messalina will be a creator of life and at the same time its creature . .

" I could not bear your love for me to deprive you of the position of the first lady in the land. You shall have the high place that was yours. But, Messalina, let us strike quickly while the iron is hot. Unless we forestall Claudius, his wrath—you know his violence—will overtake you. A single bold stroke may yet save us."

The hot-blooded Messalina remains quiet and calm at these words. Her blood seems to run cold.

" Will you despise the adulteress when you are Emperor? Oh, give no answer. Be silent! It was a silly question. Oh, how I long to be your wife!"

Now it is Silius' turn for silence.

Messalina attached no importance to being Empress for the sake of the name. To be sovereign mistress of life—ah, yes!—that was Messalina's burning impulse.

To wed him, the first man who had revealed himself to her as manly and upright. To be one with him in marriage, intimately united in the joy of life!

Married life with Claudius . . . That is not marriage! Or is it?

" What does Claudius matter to me? And his marriage, which is only valid because it was recorded with a stylus!

" Life! Oh, Caius, we will live!"

Necrolatry is beyond Messalina's ken. Traditions, hallowed by age and custom, are alien to her. Life is calling. " Caius, come with me! I have so much to tell you."

At the palace they are beginning to grow uneasy. The Empress is hardly ever to be seen there.

People whispered and murmured to one another; already they speak louder. The mood of discontent finds public expression. Silius and Messalina are now openly discussed. What do they want, the pair of them? To overthrow the Emperor? That would not be difficult. In Rome, every citizen has the right to be First Citizen, if the soldiers require it of him. The court fears an upheaval. Claudius himself does not count. But their own positions, their own lives are at stake. A palace revolution could be set on foot in the twinkling of an eye; off with people's heads once more. Silius is popular, young and handsome, energetic, unfaltering. He is on the point of becoming consul and has every prospect of succeeding to the throne. If he advances the half-witted Emperor will pale into insignificance and all Rome will acclaim Silius. When an actor, like Mnester, took liberties with the Emperor's bedchamber, it was merely a scandal; but now, all is at stake. A catastrophe is impending! What is to be done?

The poltroons of the court shook with fear.

"Should somebody speak to the Emperor? By the gods, no! The Emperor's feeble mind is swayed by his wife's every word. Should Claudius repeat to Messalina what he heard from us it would certainly be the death of us all."

They racked their brains incessantly at court.

It now occurred to some that this very malleability of Claudius ensured his being forced to take action. "But make haste, otherwise the dolt will change his mind again, and utter disaster will befall us. We must keep Messalina away from him, so that he only listens to us."

They saw themselves entangled in a coil of dangers. Perplexity everywhere. So far, the Emperor has noticed nothing. He eats and drinks, sleeps, promulgates decrees for the public welfare, and rails at the lewdness of the populace.

"Claudius, listen!—a fable:

"Once upon a time there was a young Empress.

She was in love with life. One day, in the course of her wanderings, she came upon a handsome young commoner, who was quite unlike all other men ; for he was noble in heart and mind. The young Empress flung herself upon the miracle thus suddenly revealed to her. The ecstasy of love had come upon her ; she drank and drank, the thirsting Empress, of the brimming goblets of life, and her passion waxed even more desperate ; and she forgot that she had a husband and two children by that husband . . .

" Claudius, do you hear ? They are telling this fable to-day to the children in Rome."

Claudius is engaged in business of State. It is essential for him to go to Ostia to sacrifice. For he is the pontiff, and it will redound to Ostia's lasting honour if the Emperor himself makes sacrifice there to the gods.

Messalina will have nothing to do with such sacrifices. She loves the great illusion of reality, the fairy-tale of life that may be perceived by the senses and understood by the heart.

Claudius left Rome for Ostia. This time he had an unwonted travelling companion. Seated in his carriage he was at dice with one of his courtiers.

Fate ordered the fall of the dice, on which he fixed his whole attention, not knowing that, at home, fate was playing dice with his own life for the stake.

After the sacrifice, Claudius stayed in Ostia longer than had been expected. He paid a visit of inspection to the harbour to see the stores of grain shipped from Egypt, and drank with his praetorian officers.

Narcissus had stayed behind, considering the state of affairs in Rome too serious to permit of his absence. He had, of course, together with Pallas and Callistus, carefully avoided telling the Emperor anything of the doings in Rome—although they affected his person so closely—let alone warning him ; but he was on his guard, keeping, in his own person and through spies, the strictest watch upon what was happening and impending.

Not one of the three said a single word to Messalina of the matter which was hanging over their heads, although Narcissus had but a short time before been her close ally, when he proposed with her help to dispose of Appius Silanus. How readily the impulsive creature had followed him then ! To-day, to be sure, she would no longer have succumbed to the influence of any Narcissus. She is herself alone, at one with her love, caring for nothing but Caius Silius, who gives form and essence to her love.

To celebrate the high feast of Love ! The Feast of Life ! As in Nature, diurnal, perpetual, open, free, so utterly without restraint must Messalina's wedding feast with Caius Silius also be ! Yet first of all, that none might doubt the reality of the union, it must be expressed in the language readily understood of all men. Accordingly Messalina, the Emperor's lawful wedded wife, married Silius.

There came together, on an appointed day, the newly-elected consul Caius Silius and the wife of the Emperor to be united in matrimony. The witnesses of the union were at hand ; the augurs, according to custom, were present. The bridal pair listened to the prophecies for their union ; the bride repeated them ; sacrifice was made to the gods.

All the marriage rites were performed in due order. The banquet was made ready ; the newly-married pair, with their guests, reclined on their couches at table ; they kissed and embraced one another ; spent the night in conjugal freedom ; the great purple bed was all ready.

This in a city where no man could call himself safe—a city which knew all and kept no secrets !

All this time Claudius, the consort, was still in Ostia. His wife, with her new husband, lived as in a trance. Messalina bore herself with an assurance, self-possessed and sure of purpose such as comes only of the certainty of freely indulged instincts. She must marry Caius Silius and be recognized by the whole world as this man's wife ; the world must see that life is stronger than all pretence.

Still bound to the man who was, as it were, detached from life, her deliverance should be publicly proclaimed that she might shout in the world's face : " Life, I love you ! "

The freedmen were seriously alarmed. " A new Emperor ? But the other is still there. A most embarrassing situation."

Narcissus, Pallas and Callistus took counsel. " Shall we try and frighten Messalina out of her love for Silius by covert threats, saying nothing about the rest ? If she gives up Silius, the wedding can be treated as a joke ; we can get Claudius to believe that."

Narcissus was for intervention. Pallas, who at the time was in the height of favour, voted against it ; in his cowardly heart he feared that his complaisance would land him in disaster. The shrewd Callistus also dissociated himself from Narcissus' proposal ; he had been at court in Caligula's time and learned that a man can better maintain his influence by prudence than by clear-cut action.

Although Narcissus found himself outvoted by the egoism of his friends, he still insisted that something must be done. Just for the moment, however, he was irresolute as to the best mode of attack. But he soon devised a stratagem to ensnare Messalina.

Narcissus had had much experience in making women amenable to the execution of his plans. Had he not been most successful with Messalina herself when they literally fell upon Claudius one morning and related the dream in consequence of which Appius Silanus was executed ? On that occasion Narcissus had imposed his will and triumphed. Once again, then, he relied upon his knowledge of women, this time selecting among the Emperor's mistresses in the palace the two of whom Claudius saw most and whom he understood best—Calpurnia and Cleopatra. In the first place he gave these two women rich presents, and promised them many more if they played their part well. He then told them everything he knew about Messalina and Silius, discussing the affair in its minutest details. " Once the Empress is fallen," Narcissus told the two venal women, " your influence will be greater than ever. Very well, then, it is understood that you undertake to open Claudius' eyes."

The two women were perfectly willing. Narcissus left them fully primed with information and directions. Now for Ostia and the Emperor !

In the meantime, Junia Silana, Caius Silius' first wife, was busy rousing feeling against the newly married couple by every means at her disposal. She could not have found a more willing supporter than Agrippina. Junia and Agrippina became friends, the bonds of their friendship being riveted by their common hatred.

The little party—Calpurnia, Cleopatra and Narcissus—set off for the Ostian Way ; the two other powerful ministers stayed at home. Arrival in Ostia. The Emperor still suspects nothing. Narcissus retires to the background ; entrenched behind the two mistresses, he holds his attack on Messalina in reserve. The two mistresses are to have the first word : this was pre-arranged.

Claudius grants them an audience. The curtain is rung up on the drama of treachery and perfidy. Enter Calpurnia and Cleopatra. Calpurnia falls at the Emperor's feet, shrieking: " Messalina has married Silius ! " She breathes deeply, as though a load had fallen from her breast, raises her head and, without looking at the Emperor, abruptly asks Cleopatra : " Have you heard nothing about it, then ? "

Cleopatra stands at her side, as arranged at the rehearsal. This was Cleopatra's cue. "Yes," said Cleopatra, looking down, and sighing.

Before Claudius can recover from the shock and frame a single word with his trembling lips, Calpurnia demands boldly, "Let Narcissus be called!"

The Emperor is dumbfounded, but on hearing the name "Narcissus" he brightens up at once. Narcissus is fetched immediately. The old fox had been listening the whole time behind the curtain before the entrance door. He enters and first of all most humbly begs the Emperor's pardon.

"Why did I not speak before? Ah, so long as it was only a Vettius—an insignificant physician—and other harmless creatures I honestly did not feel entitled, O Cæsar, to remark upon it. Even now I will not make the adulteress any reproach. Leave the seducer house, slaves and all the princely household which she has bestowed on him. Let him enjoy it all, but let Cæsar demand his wife back and destroy the marriage contract."

Here the cunning fellow paused a moment, then, slightly lowering his voice, and looking as though he expected some explanation from the Emperor, he asked: "Or do you know about your divorce?"

Narcissus raised his head: "The people, the Senate and the soldiers have already seen Silius' marriage. Act swiftly, otherwise the husband will be master of Rome."

Claudius fails to grasp what he is told.

The suddenness of the attack has swept him off his feet. He is incapable of action, unable to come to a decision.

The aged Turranius, prefect of the grain supply department, who had just shown him over the granaries, was in Ostia. Claudius summoned him in haste, together with some patricians of the court and the praetorian prefect, Lusius Geta.

In answer to the Emperor's report on Silius they could only say, " Yes, your Majesty, it is so ; we have known it for a long time." Claudius was in the midst of people who all knew more about his own affairs than he did himself.

The spell that had held all minds in thrall was now broken. Those whom Claudius had questioned and everyone else present all began to shout at once, vying with one another in their clamour of entreaty to the Emperor : " Go at once, before taking any other step, to the praetorian cohorts and make sure of the soldiers' allegiance ! That is more important than anything else. Before planning revenge, think of your own safety."

The panic-stricken Claudius was so bewildered that he kept on asking over and over again : " Am I still really Emperor ? Is Silius really only a plain citizen ? "

The wretched man did not feel the affront to himself as a husband—to such a degree was he concerned with the fear for his throne . . .

Mid-October.

The union between the force of the sun and the matter of earth . . . In the heady whirl the wine is born. Up ! Women, men ! Let us celebrate ! Now is the great festival. The fruit is consumed with fire. Drink the blood of the grape ! Burn with it ! On the day when, in Ostia, Messalina's adversaries were accusing her of high treason, she was celebrating the festival of life. Come hither, man, come hither, woman ! Don't you see what life is ? Don't you feel it ? Have state and dynasty and succession pushed you off the path of life ? . . .

. . . On the island of Naxos, Ariadne, deserted by man, lies sleeping on the strand, dreaming sorrowfully of a ruined life. Dionysus, god of the intoxication of life, surprises the woman and bears her home in jubilation as his wife.

Symbol of life in nature . . .

" Messalina-Ariadne," with loosened hair flying in the wind, brandishing her staff entwined with vine leaves and ivy and crowned with a pine-cone, in buskins dances madly beside " Silius-Dionysus ", who is wearing a wreath of ivy ; around them, with heads thrown back, the riotous chorus of mænads leaps in wild abandon. Evoe ! Evoe ! Marriage ! Feast of the union of matter and force. The high feast of life.

The gardens of the palace are ready for the festival of the grapes. The wine-presses crush the grapes, the brimming vats flow. The gardens teem with women lightly clad in skins, dancing like the frenzied companions of the god Dionysus. Bells tinkle, tambourines clash, singing, yelling, shrieks of wild delight resound. Messalina celebrates her wedding feast with Silius. Listen, world : life is an eternal wedding ! You shall all know it ! . . .

Vettius Valens, the Empress''s physician, bacchant, one of the festive company, climbs in wild spirits to the top of the tallest tree.

" What is it like up there ! " calls a voice from below ; and another : " What do you see, Valens ? "

Valens bends his head down and puts his hands cup-shape to his mouth that his voice may carry : " A terrible thunderstorm coming over from Ostia ! " The gardens looks as though the high feast had been blasted by lightning.

Not a sound of merriment, no desire, no abandonment . . . Shrieks of horror and dismay rend the air . . . Whimperings, lamentations. The whole company disperses, scurries, rushes wildly away. Everyone seeks safety. Scraps of talk flit through the park. . . .

Now it is quiet, the gardens empty. On the ground lie scraps of goatskin, torn ivy chaplets, tambourines, crushed under foot ; broken flutes, shoes. Forlorn desires breathe their last from hidden corners . . .

In a moment Messalina and Silius were alone. Messengers approach, running up the hill : " Claudius knows everything, he is furious, he is on the way—he is coming ! " Silius and Messalina were prepared. They parted, to play their respective parts alone. Silius returned to his official duties. Messalina went into the gardens of Lucullus. Scarcely had the two left the gardens when a whole band of soldiers arrived on the scene. They seized such of the fugitives as they could still lay hands on, dragging the terrified revellers from every hiding-place, bush, and niche. When they had finished their search, it was a troop of chained bacchantes of both sexes, naked satyrs and nymphs, that the soldiers drove before them.

Notwithstanding her surprise, Messalina surveyed the situation calmly. What she had to do now was to go and meet her husband without a moment's delay. He should see her in the flesh. She knew her Claudius! Her children, Britannicus and Octavia, should follow close behind and run into their father's arms. Vibidia, the eldest of the vestal virgins, should obtain audience of the Emperor Claudius in his capacity of pontiff and intercede for Messalina. Messalina's house on the hill in the gardens of Lucullus was suddenly empty. All had fled in fear. Where were her menservants and maidservants, her male and female slaves, her friends of both sexes who usually filled the house to overflowing ? As it was, Messalina, accompanied only by three persons, who had dared to stand by her, was compelled to walk right through the city. The coachmen and litter-bearers had all fled. Nobody volunteers any sympathy or help. Outside the city Messalina speaks to a scavenger who, in his two-wheeled cart, is removing refuse from the villas. The man nods. Messalina, Empress of Rome, gets into the cart, among kitchen garbage and household rubbish.

The scavenger gives his donkey a blow with his stick ; the cart rattles off over the broad stones of the road to Ostia. Elegant riders and charioteers returning from the races, patrician women in covered litters borne by coloured slaves, meet the scavenger's cart ; a band of merry girls are singing on their way, with some pert youths at their heels. Messalina resolutely puts away all memories of her triumphal processions along the Appian Way. The unkempt little donkey in the shafts ambles easily along.

From the direction of Ostia the Emperor's State coach draws ever nearer to the refuse cart. As yet neither vehicle knows of the other's existence. The animals trot along : the one wrteched and feeble, the others spirited and strong. Their gait is not appropriate to the burdens they are bearing to their destination.

Claudius was like a toy ball, tossed hither and thither by his own will and that of others. He could, indeed, rest assured that the soldiers, particularly the bodyguard, were loyal to him, but he did not trust Geta, the prefect of the guard. The discourse of Narcissus had shaken Claudius' confidence ; Geta would be equally amenable to good and bad influences, was the conclusion Claudius reached.

Again Narcissus was equal to the occasion. Firmly and authoritatively he spoke : " Cæsar ! Your only hope of salvation is to transfer the command of the soldiery for this one day to one of the freedmen." He said this so convincingly that Claudius, even had Narcissus not immediately offered himself as his representative, would have begged his freedman to assume the command. For one day Narcissus is Imperator !

They took their seats in the State coach : Claudius, ex-Imperator for one day, Narcissus, the one-day Imperator, Vitellius, hitherto Messalina's most devoted friend, and Largus Cæcina. Narcissus trembled with apprehension the whole way lest his two companions, as admirers and lovers of Messalina, should intercede for her with Claudius and induce him to change his mind. It was a most distressing journey for everybody in the State coach. Claudius complained continuously of his wife's shameful conduct and his unhappy marriage, and bewailed the fate of his little children, still of tender age. Vitellius kept interrupting with such expressions as " a mean trick," " a crime," which baffled Narcissus. He did not know to whom these epithets referred, and repeatedly asked Vitellius what he meant. Vitellius, however, dared not show his hand ; he could not tell what turn events would take. The time-server took cover behind the ambiguity of these exclamations.

" But now I really must insist upon knowing what these words mean ! " demanded Narcissus, attacking Vitellius, who looked at the imperial representative and produced a rigmarole of equivocal phrases. Cæcina did the same. Vitellius pretended to be on quite distant terms with Messalina ; Cæcina adopted the same attitude.

Narcissus was in a state of extreme tension. Trot, trot, went the refuse cart, smoothly, swiftly the State coach. They meet. A cry rings out from the refuse cart to the State coach : " Hear the mother of Britannicus and Octavia ! " Narcissus, in consternation, counters at the top of his voice with a torrent of words. Not a sentence is intelligible, but like thunder claps his roars of " marriage " !—" Silius ! "— are audible above the babel of voices. Narcissus wanted his outcry to deafen Claudius to Messalina's words, to blind him to Messalina's eyes ; he quickly held before his face a document setting forth all Messalina's excesses.

Full gallop ! The State coach must with all speed to Rome. Messalina and the refuse cart are left behind. Not a single word, not a gesture from

Messalina's fair-weather friends, Vitellius and Cæcina, when Narcissus shouted her down with his voice of thunder. Narcissus calls for haste. They are nearing Rome. The tension increases. The imperial carriage drives into the city. There the children of Claudius and Messalina, Britannicus and Octavia, stand awaiting their father.

Narcissus issues an imperial command : " Away with them ! " he calls to the attendants of the terrified brother and sister. Narcissus is extremely agitated. To crown all, Vibidia, the eldest of the Vestal virgins, must needs appear on the scene. As Imperator, he cannot, must not, rebuff her. Vibidia, deeply indignant at Narcissus' conduct, makes no attempt to conceal her feelings, and insists that the freedman must allow a woman to defend herself before her husband, even if she be in the wrong. " It would be grossly unjust," says she loudly, " to condemn her undefended ! "

The arbiter of destiny controls himself with an effort and restrains his wrath—for now the line of demarcation between life and death is being drawn for him too—and consoles the aged virgin : " The Emperor will certainly hear whatever evidence may be forthcoming and allow the Empress to present her defence. On, on !" The imperial carriage advances. Ever since the two vehicles conveying the divided imperial couple had met Claudius was as one struck dumb. He did not utter a word when he saw Messalina. He remained silent when his children stood before him. He made no reply to Vibidia's salutation and entreaty.

Vitellius was true to type as a coward. Not another word did he say, but assumed an air of complete ignorance. Cæcina was no longer of any account. The freedman gave the orders, Claudius and all the rest being now his subjects.

Messalina went back to her house in the gardens of Lucullus, her soul in a tumult of rage and pride.

No Imperator was ever so prompt and withal so wary as the intriguer Narcissus in exploiting a situation. The Emperor's first visit was to the house of Silius, whither Narcissus dragged him. The Emperor is still mute and the freedman gives the order to force an entrance.

" There ! " Narcissus roars at Claudius. " Open your eyes ! Who is that, there, set up in the hall as you come in ? " Claudius gapes like a man who is stunned. " That's his father ! " Narcissus screams at the Emperor. " Where your image ought to be standing, Cæsar, just look, he has the impudence to set up the image of a traitor, that he may have it before his eyes in all his comings and goings ! The man who does that is a traitor himself. Just think, Cæsar ! That's his father, the Silius who once rebelled against an Emperor, the scoundrel who was condemned and then committed suicide. Don't you remember ? And remember, too, that the wife of that same Silius, Sophia Galla, took part in the plot against the throne. Do listen to me—it was in the time of your uncle Tiberius ! Are you to have pity on people like Silius ? Come on, let's see the house ! "

Narcissus drags the Emperor into the house. Soldiers break open the locked doors. " Look at the treasures ! The old ancestral heirlooms of your illustrious family—this man has them stored in his house ! Here !—this statue, that picture, this vase—all your property, Claudius ! Are you coming to your senses ? Disgraceful, such conduct ! Do you need any further proof that Silius meant to overthrow you ? "

In a frenzy of rage, Claudius launches out into the most terrible imprecations upon Silius. The freedman avails himself of the Emperor's passion to lead him quickly to the camp, where the soldiers are already assembled in readiness to receive messages and orders. The freedman pronounces a short oration and then makes way for the Emperor.

Claudius was almost ashamed to refer to the recent events in the presence of his soldiers. Only a few words on his part were needed : the soldiers broke out into a tremendous uproar, clamouring for the names of all the guilty. Bawling at the tops of their voices, they insisted upon the extreme penalty. Claudius once more became the lay figure, Narcissus remained the man of action.

Silius was forthwith dragged before the tribunal. He faced his judges with head erect; realizing his position he made no attempt at defence and begged for no respite : " Here I am. Act quickly."

He had celebrated the high festival of life with the woman who spent it so prodigally, so what remained ? He was executed immediately. Quite a number of highly placed Roman knights had taken part in the festival of life in the gardens. All faced the executioner bravely in emulation of Silius' example.

Silius had ordered a guard of honour for Messalina, Titus Proculus, who offered to make a statement, but was not granted a hearing. Messalina's physician in ordinary, Valens, related everything without reserve. Pompeius Urbicus and Saufeius Trogus, accomplices, all were immediately beheaded ; so were the commander of the night patrol, Decius Calpurnius, Sulpicius Rufus, the administrator of the theatre, and a senator, Junius Vergilianus.

Now that the forces of destruction were released all sorts of former lovers of Messalina were also hunted out. Claudius was to be maintained and nursed in his vindictive frame of mind towards Messalina.

Mnester !—the actor, the darling of the theatre-goers ! He had once known the thrill of Messalina's nocturnal embraces ; Narcissus now had him, too, haled before the high tribunal. But the actor was not going to surrender so easily the life he loved. Before Claudius' eyes he tore his clothes from his body and appealed in a pathetic voice to the Emperor :

"Look, here are the lashes I received because I resisted temptation. Have you forgotten that you ordered me to obey your wife? Did I receive any presents, or were prospects of a special future held out to me, as to Silius? I was forced into it!" Again and again he pointed to the weals of the scourge on his body. "If Silius had taken over the helm I should have been the first to be put to death!"

Claudius had some recollection of what he had said to Mnester at the time, and moreover, he pitied the player, whose words, expressions and gestures appealed to the humanity of the weak man. Claudius was on the point of acquitting him. Immediately the freedmen noticed this they began to remonstrate with the Emperor for not having heard the defence of a knight, like Traulus Montanus and so many others of the old nobility, if a mere actor was now to count for more than a man of high social standing. This was indeed no case for clemency. So Claudius passed sentence of death on Mnester too.

Then the handsome young man whom Messalina had called in for one night and then most ungraciously dismissed, was also beheaded. Many were put on the rack, where they confessed to being accessories: as such they were condemned to death. No one was to remain alive who might have a good opinion of Messalina or speak on her behalf.

While Narcissus, in the name of the Emperor, was removing everything from his path which might later prove a source of embarrassment in case Messalina were spared, Messalina was alone. In solitude she passed the hours in the gardens of Lucullus, cut off, as it were, from the world. Where are the youths and men who used to press around her simulating adoration for the sake of the pleasure she could give them, and lay at her feet, kissing her shoes? And the one who wore Messalina's little shoe next his heart?

All over—the feasts, the joyous tumult and revelry of merry carousals. The hours that chased one another have glided away. Messalina is not thinking of the past. Life is running its course. She looks into the future. She does not, cannot realize that danger should threaten her who loves life so well. What has she done ? Messalina can find nothing reprehensible in her conduct. She has only listened to the life within her. Life must and will save her !

Shall she go to Claudius with a petition ? Messalina shudders at the idea. Apply to him whom she had never heeded for the fulfilment of a request ? Yet, it must be ! Messalina knows that no other way is now open to her.

Will Claudius read the petition and grant her a hearing in her defence ? " Who am I to bow to my inferiors ? "

She writes and writes. Now in hope and now with fury in her stylus. She writes for herself. " I made my life as I saw fit. I need no pardon ! "

Claudius returns to the palace and takes his place at table ; to-day he begins his meal earlier than usual, and enjoys it immensely. The wine is most delicious. As Claudius reclines so comfortably on his couch, a tender mood comes over him.

" I will hear the unhappy woman. Tell her to come to the palace to-morrow and say how it all happened."

Those around him trembled as if an evil spirit had entered into them. Night was at hand. How easily might memories of the nuptial chamber induce the man of feeling to change his mind ! Narcissus dashed out. Now was the critical moment. Claudius proceeded with his meal. Narcissus hastily collected those who came in his way—a couple of officers and an administrative official—to whom he shouted : " You are to carry out sentence of death on the Empress without a moment's delay. The Emperor has ordered it ! "

A freedman, Euodus, a compatriot of Narcissus, a Greek, was swiftly chosen to be executioner. The little company hurries to the gardens of Lucullus, to find them empty, and Messalina's house also. At this moment Domitia Lepida, Messalina's mother, comes to visit her daughter. Will she ask her if she is still the child that only cares for life in its true colours and plays with day-dreams?

Messalina goes with her mother into the park. In the days when fortune smiled on the Empress, mother and daughter were enemies. In the daughter's hour of need all that her mother could find to say was: "Your life has run its course, see that you seek honour in death." Messalina sinks to the ground. Her mother stands beside her, regarding the young woman, only twenty-four years old; looking out over the gardens of Lucullus, which had been adjudged to Messalina at Asiaticus' trial. Euodus races up the hill ahead of the rest. The sun shines purple in the gardens; rose-coloured cloudlets gleam in the blue sky; their colour swiftly changes to glittering gold. Silver-green, the moon rises. The purple ball sinks; far and wide the earth and sky are red as blood.

Euodus, the murderer, is in the park. Terror lends Messalina strength to flee into the house, accompanied by her mother, who counsels her not to "wait for the murderers". The door flies open, shivered to atoms. Without a word the official faces Messalina. Euodus, the freedman, assails her with a flood of coarse abuse. Can it be true? The impetuous girl, who has dreamt her way through life, cannot realize it. Must it really be? The dagger trembles in Messalina's hand—first at her throat, then at her breast . . . "Life!"

At one blow of the official's sword she falls. The executioners, after assuring themselves that Messalina has ceased to breathe, pay no more heed to the corpse; they are in a hurry, Narcissus is waiting. Let the mother do as she likes with it!

Claudius, still at table, is merely told that Messalina is killed, whether by her own or by another hand is not stated. Nor does Claudius inquire. He calls for his cup, drinks, eats and behaves as usual. He seeks no information. Replete with meat and drink, he retires to bed. Next morning Claudius displays no sign of emotion ; neither hate, nor joy, nor vengefulness, nor sadness were evident in his demeanour, not when he saw the delight of the accusers, and not when his children came to him in tears. At the next meal he asked : " Why doesn't the *domina* come to table ? . . ."

The Senate decreed that Messalina's name and image should be everywhere effaced, so that nobody should ever be reminded of this woman. No funeral oration was held over Messalina, as was ordinarily the custom in Rome. However, life had expressed itself through her in the plainest language and revealed itself in its power, annihilating and over-leaping barriers. It had chosen Messalina as its instrument, trying to assert itself in her and through her ; in its course it had often stood in its own way, then, strong in victory, it hastened on its career. Thus Messalina became the pinnacle towards which the crowd aspired behind its barriers ; the motive for the perversions with which all those who castigate Messalina are tainted ; for it was Eros lurking within them who guided the licentious chronicler's hand. In Rome the girdle that was destined to encompass in its toils the city, and with it the world, was gradually forming a circle. The church draws nigh, the seer utters these words :

" . . . I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters :

" With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication . . . and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

" And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. . ." No hard saying, this apocalyptic vision, even though the artist, in convulsive self-repression, strives to keep his imagination within bounds. Expel Eros with rods, but all the same you cannot escape his dominion. The tragedy of Eros in all his courses through the world of time and space could never have been more vividly depicted than by life itself through Messalina. Alas that Messalina herself had no command of language to transcribe her phantasies in the form of a romance ! In this feeble capacity she would have earned high praise. As it was her reckless disregard of the marriage law conferring upon the man the right of possession merely brought her into obloquy. Rulers are not endowed with the gift of recognizing greatness in artless simplicity.

The Roman people was the first nation desiring to be influenced in its evolution by the *logos* alone. What Rome achieved for itself and the world in the way of institutions was done by calculation. The women who shared in this unfolding of natural forces were absorbed by the masculine system. Messalina who alone intuitively recognized Eros as the builder of life, perished at the hands of man.

Messalina dead—Claudius alone. He cannot tolerate existence without a wife. He says, indeed, " Since I have had no luck with my matrimonial alliances, henceforth I shall remain single ; if I take another wife, it will serve me right if she stabs me with her own hands." But always he did the will of others. There was even a current jest to the effect that Claudius himself signed the marriage bond between Messalina and Silius.

What a number of fair candidates there were of a sudden in Rome for the husband whom Messalina had left behind! In the palace there was a perpetual coming and going and a clamour of many voices. Men and women, they all knew the most suitable wife for the Emperor. Nobody was deterred by the thought that the Emperor was a Claudius; it was merely a matter of being deemed worthy of so great an honour, which Messalina had so lightly disdained. Every woman wanted to outbid her rivals in respect of noble descent, beauty, and wealth, and one and all besieged the Emperor.

Like ghosts from a tomb, the figures of the three freedmen now emerged from the shady throng of matchmakers and "eligibles" and appeared before Claudius. Again the three were crafty enough to make concerted plans beforehand. Claudius dismissed everyone else who sought audience of him, wishing to hear the trio of freedmen.

Narcissus was anxious not to play too conspicuous a part in the matter, since the high-handed way in which he had disposed of Messalina was known throughout Rome. He therefore suggested that Claudius' choice of a new consort should fall upon quite an insignificant woman—none other than Aelia Petina, to whom he had already been married, but who had been summarily dismissed. He knew her already, and that was decidedly worth a great deal; Petina would also be a most suitable stepmother for his children and by no means a cruel one; she would certainly regard Britannicus and Octavia, after her own, as the next pledges of love.

Callistus contradicted him: "By reason of her long divorce Petina stands condemned; if she is accepted again, she will be presumptuous. I propose, Cæsar, that you take Lollia Paullina. She has no children, is therefore free from jealousy, and will be a true mother to her stepchildren."

Now it was Pallas' turn. He rejected Petina, and also Lollia, who had once for a few days been the wife of the Emperor Caligula. Pallas was merely the mouthpiece for what all three in their own interests, actuated by fear, wished to urge upon Claudius. Petina and Lollia, who as the wives of an Emperor might have been regarded as eligible, were eliminated by the very fact of having been proposed for this marriage, and superseded by another to be mentioned last, for with Claudius he was always right who had the final word.

"Agrippina," said Pallas, "is the only one to be considered. Reflect, great Cæsar, that she would bring into the marriage a grandson of Germanicus—truly a worthy scion of imperial sovereignty ! Unite the offspring of the Julian and Claudian families ! It would be wrong to let Agrippina, blooming as a young woman and notoriously fruitful, perpetuate the fame of the imperial house in another family."

So once again the old Augustus-Livia course was taken, which had already brought to the imperial house and Rome an uninterrupted sequence of days of terror. What cared Pallas for the Julian-Claudian family feud ? The possibility of an ultimate reconciliation was merely a pretext for his impressive recommendation of Agrippina as a new wife for Claudius. Pallas only voiced the true desire of Claudius himself for marriage with Agrippina.

The freedmen knew perfectly well that Agrippina meant to marry the Emperor and that she would ruthlessly brush aside every obstacle in her path. Even in Messalina's lifetime she had intended to marry Claudius, visiting him every day on a more intimate footing than was becoming in a niece. Although not yet his wife, she already exerted the power of the Empress.

"Agrippina and no one else," said Claudius, but he was Agrippina's uncle. Marriage between uncle and niece was regarded in Rome as incestuous and illegal. However, this was of no account, for marriage laws may be altered. Man had instituted the system of marriage for the sake of society, so his sovereign should be empowered to modify it. For marriage is not a creation of nature or upheld by natural laws.

The existing marriage law, which stood in the way of the Emperor's union with Agrippina, was amended. Vitellius was the agent and trickster chosen for the occasion. The same Vitellius, once Messalina's most devoted servant, and now consul as the result of his skilfully manœuvred double-dealing, proclaimed before the Senate that the welfare of the state required the re-marriage of Claudius for which purpose Agrippina was the most appropriate candidate. Abusing his censorial capacity, he actually pressed the Senate to force Claudius into this marriage.

He laid his case before the Senate in long, unctuous periods, interspersed with eulogies on the glorious future of the Roman State resulting from a union between the Emperor and Agrippina, who was distinguished for the purity of her morals. Squirming like an eel through a hedge of thorns, he came to his point. The entire nation, he cried, demanded that in future an uncle might marry his niece. The Senate was taken by surprise. Now Vitellius had suddenly, as though something unprecedented had occurred, dashed into the curia and, in the midst of a debate on some other business, demanded the adjournment of the session to permit the discussion of an extremely weighty matter.

Scarcely had Vitellius concluded his surprise attack than the senators stormed the palace in a body, forced Claudius into the marriage with Agrippina, and forthwith produced their resolution amending the existing marriage law. Claudius happened to be in the palace at the time, as arranged by Vitellius, and everything passed off just as the wire-pullers intended. The marriage of the Emperor Claudius, sanctioned by the State, might now take place. The beginning was not auspicious. On the wedding day Silanus, the future son-in-law of Claudius, committed suicide. Claudius had engaged him to his little daughter Octavia. Although Claudius was well disposed towards the young man and thought highly of him, Agrippina succeeded, even before the wedding, in having Silanus condemned on the ground of political machinations, of which she had falsely accused him.

Agrippina's accomplice in this affair was again Vitellius, who but a short time since had been Messalina's devoted friend. He took advantage of his position as censor to manage the affair by fraudulent means, thereby currying favour with Agrippina, for he was afraid that under the new régime his former intimacy with Messalina might cost him his life. He was not long in collecting his false evidence. He sacrificed his own daughter-in-law, the beautiful Junia Calvina, sister of Silanus, in order to ingratiate himself. Unable to adduce proof of her incestuous intercourse with her brother Silanus he indicted her of "imprudent sisterly love". Claudius believed the scandalmonger. Silanus was cast out of the Senate, of which he was a member, and condemned, while his sister, Calvina, was banished from Italy.

Claudius' other son-in-law, Magnus, who had married Antonia, Claudius' daughter by his marriage with Petina, had already been put to death.

Agrippina's reign of terror had begun. The moment Agrippina became Empress, Claudius had only to assent to all her proposals. She kept his favourites in iron bands through fear or beneficence.

The young Britannicus, Claudius' son by Messalina, was brought up as though he did not belong to the Emperor's house. Agrippina scarcely ever allowed the boy to approach his father. Many did not even know if Britannicus was still alive ; he was never shown to the people. Agrippina suppressed the boy in every way, stinting him of proper care and his rightful share of recognition. She spread reports that he was " moonstruck and mad ". Whoever showed him any sympathy or affection was banished for life. His tutor Sosibius, who at the time of the Asiaticus case had shown himself devoted to her predecessor Messalina, was accused of conspiring against the life of Agrippina's son Nero, and forthwith removed. She handed the boy over to the first comer, and practically kept him a prisoner ; all Britannicus wanted now were chains and shackles.

For her son Nero, however, whom she had brought with her into the marriage—he was a child by her first husband, Cneius Domitus Ahenobarbus—she engaged the philosopher Annæus Seneca as tutor. Seneca was promptly recalled from exile, whither he had been sent in Messalina's time. He came, and showed himself anxious to please Agrippina, who continued her game of chess. With unscrupulous calculation she pushed the piece representing Nero further and further towards the front. Nero should marry Octavia, daughter of Claudius and Messalina. This time Agrippina had nothing against Messalina's child, which was after all to be but a means of bringing Nero closer to the throne. She bribed the newly appointed consul Menennius Pollio with enormous sums to use the weight of his official reputation and status in advocating the marriage of Nero and Octavia. Pollio had before him the example of Vitellius whom he resembled in character ; he did as Vitellius had done when he played the match-maker to Claudius and Agrippina. The latter worked feverishly for the advancement of her son Nero. Britannicus was still very much alive ; she feared that when he grew up he would set about avenging his mother Messalina.

It was not long before Agrippina was on terms of intimacy with Pallas, the freedman, and had involved that corrupt wire-puller in her schemes. He was to prevail upon Claudius to adopt Nero, emphasizing the advantage to the younger Britannicus of finding support in an elder and stronger brother. This was accordingly done by Pallas, that tool of the intriguing Agrippina—thus, said he, must Claudius take thought for the welfare of the State. Pallas undertook something further, pointing out to Claudius the political reasons which had prompted Augustus also to adopt his stepson in the interests of the State. Nero was two years older than Britannicus : that would make a great deal of difference should Claudius ever need a collaborator.

Pallas obeyed Agrippina in everything from sheer cowardice, just as formerly, like Vitellius and the other members of his " syndicate ", he had been the most humble servant of her rival Messalina. No one is dominated by an instinct for the creation of an individual life ; action is determined and existence moulded by the lust for power.

Again, like a mechanical puppet, Claudius obeyed and tore to the Senate, which agreed to everything. Agrippina even received the honourable title of " Augusta by the grace of God ", but Messalina's son sank into ever lower depths of degradation. The Emperor's son was no longer even allowed a slave to wait upon him. Only one more little move is required for the marriage of the sixteen-year-old Nero to Octavia. Roman law did not permit the marriage of brother and sister and through adoption Nero had become Octavia's brother. However, all that was necessary was to have the little Octavia temporarily adopted by another family. Thus a way out of the difficulty was found and the marriage of Nero with Octavia was solemnized.

Agrippina needed a great deal of money for herself and her son to reach the summit of power. She thought no means " too petty or too vile " to satisfy her cupidity. She made friends with all the rich and " was pleasant to them " in order to coax their money out of their pockets ; if they showed reluctance they were put to death and their property confiscated.

She did not even spare women. Among others, Agrippina looked askance at Lollia Paullina, who at one time had entertained hopes of becoming Claudius' wife. Lollia, therefore, was the object of Agrippina's most inveterate enmity ; she hated her, and sought a pretext for her legal condemnation. It was easy to find an accuser who was willing for a consideration to declare that Lollia practised sorcery and that she had consulted an oracle about her marriage with the Emperor. This was quite enough for Claudius to make a speech in the Senate demanding the execution of Lollia ; she was too rich, he said, and her wealth might constitute a danger to the State. The slavish Senate immediately agreed. Lollia was deprived of her immense revenues and banished from Italy. This was not enough, however, for Agrippina, who despatched assassins to the exiled Lollia with orders to bring her the head of her whilom rival. This was done. On the long journey, however, Lollia's features had undergone such a change that Agrippina no longer recognized her face. So she seizes the severed, decomposing head and puts her finger into its mouth. Now she is satisfied. She gropes in the mouth with her fingers and assures herself that it is indeed Lollia's head—those are her curious teeth.

The sword was in perpetual motion hacking off heads ; Agrippina needed such vast sums of money. She simply must be the richest woman ; then she would be supreme.

Statilius Taurus was charged with maladministration of the province of Africa, and furthermore of being addicted to black magic. But the reason he was hunted to death was on account of his beautiful gardens ; Agrippina wanted to possess Taurus' park. Agrippina is nearing the goal of her passionate desire ; Nero is to ascend the throne. Every obstacle is forcibly removed from her path. Britannicus no longer counts. Already Nero is describing him to his father as a spurious son.

There remained the two prefects of the praetorian guard, Lusius Geta and Rufus Crispinus, who in Messalina's day had dragged Asiaticus from Baiae to stand his trial in Rome, and of whom she wanted to dispose, suspecting that they were still loyal to the memory of Messalina and her children. Then the coast would be clear. The Emperor was cajoled by his wife into thinking it was not a good thing for his bodyguard to have two commanders, as this might easily lead to the formation of rival parties. Claudius should entrust the command to a single man, preferably Burrus Afranius, who " knew perfectly well whom he had to thank for his promotion ".

Claudius was Emperor in name, Agrippina in deed. She deprived him of all the distinctions and privileges belonging to the Emperor and claimed them for herself. She had already appointed a commander-in-chief, thereby encroaching on one of the Emperor's traditional prerogatives, and she did not shrink, moreover, from assaults upon the exalted office of high priest, which was vested in the Emperor. She drove to the Capitol in a " carriage which from time immemorial had been reserved for the sole use of the priests and the Most Holy ". Like her great-grandfather Augustus, she unscrupulously usurped one position of power after another.

Not Rome alone should know who was the sovereign ; other countries, nay, the world must learn that Agrippina is its Empress. " To show her power " she ordered " veterans to be led " to her birthplace, the *Oppidum Ubiorum* [1], " to found a colony, to be named after her"—*Colonia Agrippinensis.*

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[1] Cologne.

In public, the Emperor was merely allowed to furnish information concerning matters of State or to receive legates, while Agrippina held sway from her dais at his side. In a word, all he was called upon to do was to hold his peace. In the meantime the assassin's dagger had rid the now omnipotent Agrippina of all those whom she regarded as obstacles in her path.

Wherever Agrippina looked, she had conquered with weapons taken from a decadent manhood. As for Nero, she had made arrangements some years beforehand that he was to be consul when he reached the age of twenty. Attired as an Imperator, Nero now appears on the scene, while Britannicus is still in boy's clothes. A confidence test : whoever expressed any sympathy for Messalina's son, whether soldier, officer or anyone else, fell a victim to Agrippina's vengeance.

The threads of power were converging ever closer to a central point. The triumvirate of the freedmen had crumbled away. Death had removed Callistus from their midst. Pallas was the favourite and bedfellow of Agrippina. Narcissus was already afraid of the Empress. She, Agrippina, was the Empress who had been enthroned in her dress of gold thread beside Caligula in his purple robe when the drama of Lake Fucinus had come to so untoward an end. It was there that the first serious altercation had occurred between the freedman and minister, Narcissus and the Empress Agrippina.

Narcissus had organized the work of the lake department somewhat perfunctorily because he had misappropriated the funds allotted for the purpose —so people said. Whether this was actually the case or whether Narcissus planned the catastrophe to overwhelm Agrippina by the waters, falling masses of earth or general panic, can never be known.

Behind facts lie motives. Who can know them all?

The course taken by events in the imperial household made it imperative that Narcissus should take steps to protect himself against Agrippina. Now there was enmity in the palace at every turn. Pallas had become Narcissus' enemy, now that their own lives were at stake the ties of country and of common fate were dissolved. There were two rival factions: Agrippina–Pallas, and those who served them; on the other side, Narcissus and the Emperor with their following. Between them stood Nero, for whose good graces his mother Agrippina and his aunt Domitia Lepida, Messalina's mother, were rivals.

Lepida made common cause with the minister, Narcissus, murderer of her daughter Messalina, against their mutual enemy, Agrippina. As long as Agrippina was Empress, the time was a story of hate; a struggle for power by every conceivable criminal means. Nero himself was frequently treated in a very arbitrary manner by his mother, who still cherished her ambition to be sovereign representative and mistress of world power. The aunt turned her sister-in-law's attitude to her own account, flattering her nephew and doing her utmost to please him. Thus fresh seeds of hatred were sown. Neither of the two women took any real interest in Nero. Each was demanding something for herself from fate.

Lepida could occupy the place at Claudius' side just as well as Agrippina, on whom this aspect of the case was not lost. A twofold accusation was laid before the Emperor. Nero's aunt was plotting against Agrippina's life with the aid of sorcery. If that was insufficient to secure a conviction, then she had kept her slave bands in Calabria "in a state of indiscipline", involving the risk of an insurrection. Narcissus entered an emphatic protest, but in vain. Agrippina's influence upon Claudius was too powerful. Domitia Lepida was found guilty and condemned to take her own life.

Narcissus was beginning to feel lonely. At times the aged Claudius still sought with his freedman the support of which he stood so much in need. But Narcissus himself was ageing, and no longer possessed the energy which had once made him master of the art of Roman-imperatorial government. He mattered to nobody and nobody to him. The great man, once omnipotent, was all alone. Only one solitary being accompanied him at every step. Messalina, the woman executed without a hearing, lived in her murderer's memory, and left him no peace. He saw himself deserted by the world of the living, an onlooker at the revolting struggle for power. He said at court to one or two whom he still trusted : " Nero or Britannicus—it's all the same whom I serve. I've raised far worse folk to power than I've destroyed."

Messalina was the rock on which he struck. He had never reflected that all power is only a lie against life.

And so, half in despair, he turns to the twelve-year old Britannicus, embracing him with the words : " Boy, be a man ! " Raising his hands, first to heaven, then to Messalina's son, he cries : " Grow up ! Overthrow your father's enemies and take vengeance upon the murderers of your mother ! "

About the same time Claudius at last caught a glimpse of his son Britannicus, for whom the father had been yearning. Full of tenderness, Claudius folds the boy in his arms : " When you're older, I'll explain to you about everything I did." As the boy was leaving, Claudius called after him : " He who wounded you will heal you too." Ah, if only Claudius could ! . . . Forthwith he would instal Messalina's son in the place of which he had dispossessed him for the sake of Agrippina's Nero.

All this was secretly reported to Agrippina by her court spies. She had long been as suspicious of Narcissus as he was of her. But now she no longer trusted Claudius either. With her, ambition and lust for power were ever on the watch, and these were now reinforced by suspicion and fear. Narcissus, she told herself, had already disposed of one Empress, with the approval of the old man. When she further learned that Claudius had told a freedman that " it is my fate, too, to have nothing but unchaste wives and be obliged to punish them ", the day after he had passed sentence upon an adultress, her mind was made up. So far she had waded through blood and trodden on corpses to gain her position of ascendancy. Was she to give up now that her ultimate goal was so near ? " Nero must be Emperor ! "

To separate her adversaries and overcome them singly were her tactics. She recommended Narcissus to try a watering-place for his gout, and induced him to go to Sinuessa in Campania, far away from Rome. Agrippina was prepared for all emergencies. She also endeavoured to prepare the people and the Senate with the assurance that when Claudius was no more " Nero was man enough to take over the government ". She promulgated this in an edict to the people and wrote it to the Senate. She had already " organized disturbances of public order on account of the price of bread " in order to diminish the prestige of Claudius' government, but everyone in Rome knew that the whole thing was engineered by Agrippina.

Claudius " found her behaviour no longer supportable ; he began to think of divorcing her and declaring his son Britannicus successor to the throne ". Agrippina thought of Messalina and feared that she might share her fate.

Now was the time for Locusta to help. She was highly recommended as a poisoner. She had, to be sure, " just been sentenced for poisoning, but had long served the government as tool " and was therefore reliable. Agrippina held a most earnest consultation with the crafty Gallic woman ; she insisted that the poison must not cause sudden death, since that would be too conspicuous ; neither must death be too lingering, as that would give Claudius time to think of Britannicus ; it must, she told Locusta, " confuse his mind and retard death ".

They went to table. One of the dishes was Claudius' favourite, mushrooms. Halotus, the *praegustator*, tasted every dish in his master's presence, as was his wont before the Emperor partook of it. Claudius might therefore dine with an easy mind.

" Here ! "—said Agrippina to Claudius, handing him the mushroom which Locusta had cunningly treated with poison : " This is the best ". The Emperor eats, his mind becomes clouded ; they carry him off, half drunk with wine and half-poisoned, to an adjoining room. The next day—the morning of the 13th October, A.D. 54—he died.

Overcome with grief, appealing for pity, Agrippina plays her rôle of " the best mother ", theatrically holding Messalina's son, Britannicus, in close embrace. " You are the very image of your father ", she sobs, striving with might and main to prevent the youngster from darting out of the room. Octavia, daughter of Messalina and Claudius, together with the daughter of Claudius and Petina, whose betrothed Agrippina had brought to his death, also had to keep vigil with the sorely tried mourner that her plan might succeed.

Guards were posted before the doors. From time to time Agrippina sent a message to say that the Emperor was better, and ordered the priests to say prayers for the life of the Emperor, who was already dead. The soldiers were to hear nothing until all the preparations for her surprise attack were complete.

Noon. The palace gates were thrown open. Burrus appears with Nero, the seventeen-year old prince, and calls upon the guards for acclamation. Nero, amid the roars of the soldiery, is lifted into a litter and duly presented to the troops. It is finished ; Nero is Emperor. Assassins are already on their way to Sinuessa, where Narcissus receives them. Before his end he quickly burnt " Claudius' letters against Agrippina and others which, as the Emperor's private secretary, he was holding in custody ".

The Empress-mother Agrippina now behaved like the wife of the young Emperor. To retain her own ascendancy and keep her son in tutelage she went so far " that at noon, a time when Nero was generally heated with food and wine, she would repeatedly offer herself adorned and ready for incest, to the drunkard ". The bystanders observed " passionate kisses and other significant caresses, heralds of their wanton intentions ".

Nobody doubted " that he himself hankered after sexual commerce with his mother " . . . " that the uncontrollably violent and imperious woman intended by means of such a relationship to gain an unshakable hold over him ".

Seneca, the moralist, who had himself entertained adulterous relations with Agrippina, came to the rescue. He sought to remedy matters by " setting one woman against another's temptations " and sent the beautiful freedwoman Acte to Nero's house as a antidote to Agrippina.

This infuriated Agrippina, who asked : " Is a freedwoman to be my rival for your love ? " But Nero did not relinquish Acte. A plot was ripening. He was sick and tired of his mother, one of whose habits was to listen behind curtains when he was issuing edicts from the throne or giving audience to legates and suddenly darting out with a request to take her seat beside him.

Now Agrippina tried tenderness, offering herself to her son as confidante in his love affairs and placing her apartments at his disposal for his amorous episodes, but all in vain. As a last resort, Messalina's enemy and supplanter set her hopes on Messalina's son Britannicus. Her own son had deprived her of her last stand-by at court, the freedman Pallas. " You are only adopted ! " Agrippina screamed at Nero, forgetting that he had her sacred Julian blood in his veins. " Britannicus is the first and only scion worthy to enter upon his father's sovereign inheritance. Let it come to light that I poisoned Claudius ! All I want is that you should perish with your precious Burrus and Seneca ! " The result was that Nero poisoned Britannicus.

Now figures arise before Agrippina, like images of bygone days, as Messalina's avengers : Domitia Lepida, deprived of her husband by Agrippina, and Junia Siluna, whom Silius divorced for Messalina's sake and whom Agrippina had alienated in her cupidity, accuse Agrippina of high treason.

Domitia's freedman, the actor Paris, whom Nero admired as an artist, undertook to bring Agrippina's conspiracy to his knowledge. Agrippina's defence, in which she acted as her own counsel, was heard.

The freedman Anicetus, naval engineer and commander of the fleet at Cape Misenum, who hated Agrippina as much as his master did, conceived a plan which he communicated to Nero : " No man," said Anicetus, " can ascribe the fault of the winds and the waves to foul play. I will build you a ship that will open at sea of its own accord and let the unsuspecting occupants into the water." Lovely Baiae, that exquisite spot beside the sea, where nature gladdens the human heart, was chosen. Nero asked his mother to visit him there. He even accompanied his mother on the road to Bauli, where he excused himself, on the ground that the carriages were unsafe, and took leave of her, saying that he would see her again. He embraced his mother, kissing her bosom and saying : " Farewell and keep well, dear mother ; in you I live, through you I rule." Thus they parted.

Without Nero, Agrippina embarks on Anicetus' ship. It is a starry night and the sea is calm. On board they chat and indulge in hopes. Doubtfully Agrippina asks her friend whether Nero still loves his mother. With a crash, the leaden roof of the cabin falls in, causing uproar and consternation. Some are dead and others wounded. Those who are ignorant of the scheme hamper the initiated by their noise and commotion. The mechanism of calamity has failed. They search the ship for Agrippina. " Here I am ! " screams Acerronia Polla, Agrippina's confidante and friend, thereby saving the Empress from destruction and receiving the death-blow in her stead.

Agrippina, slightly wounded on the shoulder, " reaches the lake of Lucrinus by swimming and then in boats which came out to meet her, and is conveyed thence to her villa ". She tended her shoulder-wound ; but before giving a thought to the possible sequel of that short and fateful passage of time in which she had narrowly escaped shipwreck, she had a search made for Acerronia's will, to make sure that she was to inherit her friend's estate. Then she despatched the freedman Agerinus to her son to report " that through the merciful dispensation of the gods and through her own good fortune she had escaped a grave disaster ".

Meanwhile Nero was waiting and waiting for news, but no messenger came to announce the success of the sinister plan. When Nero heard what had happened, he was " beside himself with fright " and screamed : " She will take her revenge !—Quick ! " Seneca and Burrus are summoned. Seneca, who had already advised Nero to make away with his mother, blinks at Burrus : " Will your praetorians consent to kill a member of the house of Caesar ? " Burrus shakes his head. “ Anicetus,” says he, “ must fulfil his promise.” “ At once ! ” replies Anicetus, and in response to a word from Nero he goes off with a few men.

“ There you are,” observes Nero, “ a freedman is to establish my sovereignty for me, if you please.” Agerinus, Agrippina’s messenger, enters Nero’s presence, bringing word from his mistress that she is in need of rest and cannot come for the time being. The comedy continues. Nero throws a dagger at the messenger’s feet : “ See, I have caught him in the act !—The dagger with which he would murder me has fallen from his hand. Help ! Help ! Bind him ! Kill him ! ” . . .

Agrippina’s villa is surrounded by an inquisitive crowd. Anicetus, with his rowers, forces his way through ; batters down the closed doors, knocks over the slaves who attempt to bar his path, and stands before Agrippina’s bed-chamber, which reeks with the smell of the lamp.

The last remaining servants have fled in alarm.

Anxiously the mother awaits a message from her son. Agerinus has not returned.

“ What’s that noise ? ”

The only remaining slave-girl who has held out to the end at her side, runs away. “ Are you deserting me, too ? ”

Anicetus stands before Agrippina, who says : “ Tell him I am better . . . or . . . You’ve no orders for matricide ! ” Anicetus and two naval officers approach Agrippina’s bed and a heavy blow falls on her head. A sword is drawn. She bares her body to receive the weapon : “ Strike here ! ” Marriage ? . . .

Agrippina lies, murdered, on her bed. Nero comes and views the corpse, feeling it, praises one part and criticises another. At last he says : “ I never knew that I had such a beautiful mother ”.

Agrippina is dust. No earth covers her ; she was never buried. A plaything of the winds . . . fourteen years Imperator. . . . Soldiers, people, provinces, free themselves from the spell and escape from the toils of Imperial power. Nero looks round for faithful subjects : they are fled. Midnight. Hounded by fear, he deserts the " House of Gold ".

" Barefoot, in his underclothes, covered by an old, faded cloak, the hood drawn low over the face, the fugitive sits upon a horse ; it shies ; he steals with bare feet through bushes and thorny thickets ; wades through reeds, hides in a sand-pit. To cool his feverish agitation, he scoops up water from a puddle with his hand and drinks. He crawls along on all fours in the thorn-rent cloak and squeezes himself through a small excavation leading into the cramped slaves'-chamber of a house."—Love of life ? . . .

" Have done with such shame ! "—says a soldier to the Imperator.

Trampling of horses' hoofs. A message comes : " Nero is the enemy of his country ! Death to him ! Naked, with his neck in the *furca*, let him be beaten to death with rods ! "

Nero puts the dagger to his throat : " Will nobody show me how it's done ? "

The noise of horses' hoofs drowns the screams of the pursuers, who mean to take him alive.

" Drive it home ! " Nero's secretary seizes his hand, which holds the dagger in a convulsive grip, and presses it against his throat. The Julian-Claudian family feud is at an end.

What Augustus began, Nero finished. The curtain falls on the sorry comedy. The actors are dead ; so are those who played the minor parts, and the prompters who once whispered the cues are no more.

Octavia, the little Empress of Nero the Emperor, is gone too. Nero cast her off, banished her, murdered her. The sycophant Vitellius, who had stood so high in Agrippina's good graces, was convicted of high treason and compelled to hide, an outcast from the world, in order to escape death. Suillius, still under the stigma of the Asiaticus trial, was in exile. Pallas was far too rich for Nero, who had him executed and took his money. Domitia Lepida, Nero's aunt, was poisoned by her nephew, who wanted her property at Baiae for himself. The death sentence for Locusta, the poison-brewing Gallic woman, was already under consideration. Nero's successor, the Emperor Galba, had her put to death. Burrus was poisoned by Nero.

Seneca, whilom lover of young Julia and then of Agrippina, was sentenced to death by Nero. The moral philosopher died in torment. The Emperor had graciously allowed him to die by his own hand. He opened his veins ; this did not kill him ; he took poison ; it had no effect ; he tried suffocation in a vapour bath without success. A slave had to help to kill him, this man who had preached the art of holding death in contempt and who, when obliged to follow his own precepts, was not ashamed of playing a comedy by letting his wife Paullina commit suicide first and thus show him the way. The moralist was inconsistent towards death as towards life ; he loved life and pretended to despise it. He was untrue to himself. " He was, in his writings, an uncompromising opponent of tyranny and taught a tyrant ; he vilified the society of sovereigns and simply could not be moved from the palace ; inveighed against flattery and launched eulogies in abundance from the place of exile whither Messalina and the freedman had dispatched him ; he censured the rich and had a personal fortune of seventy-five million denarii ; he condemned ostentation in others and himself owned over five hundred small tables of citron wood with ivory legs, all of the same size, which it was his wont to set before his guests ; he was a pederast and preached against perversion."

Rome went in fetters of her own forging. In her expansion into a world-empire she had overlooked life. She was ensnared by the illusion of might, which as a cement to unite her disparate foreign elements contributed to her greatness—but she did not know that, compared with life, her greatness was a trifle. She confounded spatial expansion with vital development, not realizing that the co-ordination of many parts through State legislation does not make a living organism. Rome's concept of might held sway for centuries over the mind of man, exacting obedience to its commands, and ultimately became the fate of a world. When its error is apparent to all it will disappear like the Roman Empire disappeared.

"Do you suppose that, just because you want to be the universal masters, everybody will tolerate bondage ?" Caractacus, the little King of the Britons, asked the great Imperator.

In several hundred years of perpetual carnage Rome consummated its marriage of blood with the world. The festive games for the occasion were the battle of the new with the old, of the living with the fossilized, the war of subordinate against superior ; the revolt against despotism of nationalities deprived of their rights ; the blows dealt by might against the force of life, the rebellion of vital freedom against oppression. And the crowning glory of this circus, where crimes which were a disgrace to life were paraded in triumph, was the maniac dance of the man of the people, Imperator, with a headless nation.

"Rome!—thy might shall sway the nations of the earth !" In the beyond Messalina celebrates her hymen.

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